LITTLE "JIM CROW"

"'AIN'T YOU GOT NO *BUTTONS* IN ALL DIS BIG STOR'?'"

LITTLE "JIM CROW"

AND OTHER STORIES OF CHILDREN

BY

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TO

DR. JOHN McENTEE WETMORE

Revered Physician and Loyal Friend
I Gratefully Dedicate this Book

CLARA MORRIS HARRIOTT

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HE strange power which ordains that each member of a colored family should be of a different shade from every other member must have been in full force when little "Jim Crow's" case was under consideration, for he was black—uncompromisingly black.

He had a buff sister, a brown mother, and a red-brown brother; but, for all that, his own smooth, fine-grained skin was decidedly black.

Jim Crow, by the way, was not Jim Crow, save by the grace of a woman's whim—mine, to be exact. He was William Jones, or had been until my eye fell upon him, when I instantly hailed him as my little "Jim Crow," a name which his mother, our cook, soon adopted; the neighborhood followed suit, and he him-

self seemed to regard it as an honorary title to be proud of.

He was as pretty as a little cupid. He had all the malicious mischievousness of a monkey old in sin, allied to the boundless love of life of a young puppy. He could sing, he could dance, he could climb, turn somersaults, stand on his woolly head, and did a surprising amount of his walking upon his hands, with heels in air.

The house we lived in belonged to an uncle who had formerly been the mayor of New York, this fact being proved by the presence of two extra lamps before the front door, gas being the medium through which that city honors its chief officer. These very large lamps in their tall standards, and the broad stone steps they flanked, were immediately turned by my little Jim Crow into a sort of private gymnasium.

My husband, like every one else, was fond of this tiny black man, but he never gave his entire approval to this gymnasium business. He did not mind, for himself; his conscience was clear and his

nerves steady; but some of our friends had nerves that were not always under perfect control. These people were apt to feel a sort of knee-loosening shock at being suddenly addressed by a person hanging upside down somewhere over their heads.

With his toes inside the lamp, his head hanging down, and his arms all abroad, Jim Crow looked like some strange foreign fruit which had failed to ripen.

One poor lady was brought to the point of smelling-salts, wine, and much fanning, through seeing, as she declared, "a very small person coming down your steps, my dear, who had no head!"—Jim Crow in the dusk having been practising walking on his hands.

All the marked characteristics of his strange race could be learned from this small black volume. Here was the love of music, dance, and color, the boastfulness, the intense devotion to special members of the white race, the easy, graceful romancing, the warm-hearted generosity, with the occasional gleams of treachery,

all cropping out in this tiny black man of five years.

Both his mother and sister were in our employ, and between them Jim Crow received "more kicks than ha'pence," and more cuffs than kisses.

Injustice sometimes stirred him to revenge, and then—I think I have said he was generous, but never, never did he show such cheerfully boundless generosity as when he was "giving away" his mother and his sister. The methods of his betrayals were amusing in the extreme, since he invariably set them to music. Usually he sang his accusations to the tune of an old Methodist hymn.

On one occasion, a large, imposing chicken-pie had been built and furnished forth on Monday, and on Tuesday my lord and master desired its presence, that he might make an assault upon it.

But there was no chicken-pie!

"Why? What? What has become of it?" was the next inquiry.

"The rats ate it, sir!"

We shuddered. What awful rats!

What size, what ferocity! To be able to demolish such a structure, and in one night!

Two days later my mother had occasion to press out some lace for me, and Jim Crow at once placed himself by the ironing-board. He stood upon one bare foot, and tenderly stroked his shin with the pale sole of the other foot, now and then pausing a moment to scratch the calf of his leg with a slow and thoughtful toe; and while doing this he sang in his sweet child's voice these words, to the tune of "Old Hundred":

> "Rats, rats, rats, rats, rats, rats!
> Little rats, big rats, bigger rats!
> Some more-ore rats!"

The continued repetition of that one word attracted her attention, as it was intended to do, and the moment her eyes met his maliciously sparkling ones there flashed into her mind the memory of certain cries and lamentations which had issued from the basement that very morn-

ing, and she understood that this was to be revenge; in fact, Jim Crow was chanting his war-song:

"—rats, rats, rats!
Sometimes rats eat things;
Sometimes they don't!"

A quick, angry voice from the next room suddenly cried:

"You Jim Crow, come in yere!"

But Jim Crow sang sweetly though somewhat hurriedly on:

"Rats eats some chicken-pies, not ours."

Voice: "Jim Crow, are yer coming?"

"Rats did n't eat *our* chicken-pie!"

A large brown hand was thrust through the doorway; it grasped Jim Crow by the back of his wee shirt and dragged him out of the room backward; but even as he made that unwilling and ignominious exit, he shouted loud and clear his last line:

"Naygars eat dat pie! Naygars eat it all!"

Shortly after the pie episode I found Jim Crow holding in his arms some small object upon which he lavished the tenderest terms of endearment. As soon as he saw me he gave the three standing jumps and the whoop which were his usual morning greeting, then exclaimed:

"Now, den, honey, stan' on yo' foots, an' show yersel' to Miss Cla'h!"

"Honey" obeyed. It seemed like a sneer at misery to call the creature a kitten. As it wavered toward me on its weak little legs, and piteously raised its one green and only eye to my face, I felt the tears coming. In the scheme of its structure fur had not been considered an important item, and flesh had not been considered at all; but the amount of tail used in the make-up of that one small slip of a cat was something wonderful. I took up the little scrap of metropolitan misery, and a vibration in its skinny throat told me it was trying to purr, but was literally too weak to make a sound; though when I obtained some warm milk for it, its savage hunger forced it to clamber into the

dish, where it stood ankle-deep in the strength-giving fluid.

While pussy was engaged in the milk-storage business, Jim Crow conversed pleasantly on the peculiarities of cats in their relations to the different races of men, white or black. With a wise wag of his head, he remarked:

"Miss Cla'h, dat ain't no white man's cat."

"Why?" I asked.

He gave me a surprised look, and answered: "Hain't got eyes enuf. White man's cat always has two eyes."

"Well," I said, "it 's a dreadfully ugly little thing. I am sure *no* one wants it."

Then was Jim Crow angry. With his brows knit and his under lip thrust out, he had for a moment an expression as black as his skin. But it lasted only a moment; then the roguish look was back, and with his usual white-toothed smile he exclaimed: "Miss Cla'h, don' you know dat cat 's a niggah man's cat? Wh-wh-why, dat 's a lucky cat; an', Miss Cla'h—" He stopped to put his finger in his mouth,

hung his head, and worked one foot round and round a figure in the carpet; then, with a world of persuasion in his voice, of entreaty in his dark eyes, he laid a little pleading hand on my knee, and almost whispered, "Miss Cla'h, dat little cat wiv one eye 'u'd jist 'bout suit me to deff."

That ended it. Jim Crow had his way, and his cat. A few days later there was to be seen, walking slowly around the grass-plot, a very small cat which had the appearance of having swallowed whole a large, hard, and very round apple, so distended were her sides, so thin her frame.

I wish I could say I never, never had cause to regret my kind act, but as a strictly truthful woman I cannot say it. You see, this was an ash-barrel cat,—one should always remember that,—and she ("Misery" was her name, though Jim Crow always called her "Mis'sy") matured early. Almost before we knew it, Misery had the reputation of being able to spit farther at one hiss, tear longer splinters out of the fences, sing more ear-piercing songs, and give a more soul-harrowing

high C than any cat on the block, bar none. But there! let 's have done with Misery (would we could!); it 's of Jim Crow I would speak.

When he became a member of our household he had a limited wardrobe and absolutely no manners, so I proceeded to add something to his outfit in both directions. He was bright, quick, and had a good memory, and if he could only be kept still long enough to absorb your meaning he was nearly sure to remember your lesson.

But he gave me some trying moments, I must confess. For instance, while I would be trying to explain to him those laws of politeness which rule the actions of little gentlemen, Jim Crow, with his eyes fixed solemnly on my face, would lean his elbows on my knees, and kick himself in the rear with a vigor and rapidity truly surprising. On one of these occasions I told Jim Crow that he need not do that, as doubtless through his whole life other people would do the kicking for him. This greatly amused him;

he laughed immoderately, and when he went down-stairs he told his mother that "Miss Cla'h said that he was to do nuffen, and other pussons would kick holes clean frou his life!"

And thereupon that irascible bondwoman delivered her sentiments to the effect that: "Law sakes! She wished dey 'u'd begin right away! That she 'd like to kick him full o' holes hersel', beca'se o' that ornery, no-account, one-eyed cat o' hisn," etc.

It was not long before Jim Crow comprehended that certain benefits followed in the train of good manners. First of all, there was the keen delight of bowing deeply and gracefully to his own reflection in the basement windows. Then there was the charm of hearing his own voice declaiming loudly all his manners in one breath, if his lungs permitted it, thus: "Yes, sir; no, sir; yes, 'um; no, mum; if you please; thank yer; howdy do? good-by; can I 'sist you? is there anythin' I can do?" Then there were the admiring exclamations, not unaccompanied by

nickels, of ladies who were charmed by his deep bow and the graceful sweep of his little arm as he removed the crown of his hat before them. There were no brims to Jim Crow's hats, and I feel sure that had there been brims, then there would have been no crowns.

I also led Jim Crow a short, a very short, distance along the paths of education. He could count up to six with temperate calmness, but beyond that point his figuring was directed by an absolutely tropical imagination; while his joyous greeting of A, B, C, and D was in marked contrast to his doubtful acknowledgment of E and his absolute non-recognition of F.

Only a modicum of his time was spent in pursuit of education and manners; the other part he gave to a search for some new way of almost breaking his neck.

What was left of his day had many claims upon it. Misery had to be fed often and to be talked to. Everything I tried to teach Jim Crow up-stairs he tried

to teach his cat down-stairs. Then he had to romance a good deal about Misery to the neighboring servants, that they might be brought to appreciate all her remarkable qualities as a lucky cat.

Besides all this, he had to exercise that faculty which he had inherited from uncountable ancestors—the faculty of sleep. If his grown-up sister slept with all the stops open, leaning against any largish piece of furniture that came handy, and his mother—I have seen her standing before a chopping-bowl, taking a refreshing nap, with her hand still holding the raised knife. When she awoke the knife descended; operations were resumed. There was no yawning, no rubbing of eyes; she had been asleep, she was now awake, that 's all, and—"What of it?" Oh, nothing, Maria, nothing! I am only saying, now, that if the grown-up women required this refreshment, how much greater was the need of Jim Crow, who was burdened with the additional duty of having to grow a little bit each day, unless he wished to become a freak.

Therefore it was not surprising to find him in the somewhat ridgy embrace of the willow clothes-basket, or lying across the flagged walk, with his head pillowed on the grass-plot, or sitting upon an overturned horse-bucket, with his head against the stable door, and his face lifted up full to God's great search-light, the sun, whose fierce rays brought out no stain of sin, no vestige of vice, upon the black little countenance, innocent, as yet, as any white baby's in the land.

In the winter Jim Crow's favorite place of retirement from carking cares was under the kitchen table, well back against the wall, where his fingers and toes were safe from the far-reaching "tromp" of the African feet about him.

With his head painfully close to the nearly red-hot range, his feet in the direct and icy draft of an outer door, he would sleep happy and comfortable. Indeed, he found himself so comfortable that he often remained there some time after he had awakened, on which occasions he was very apt to interject certain remarks into such

conversation as was going on; and, odd as it may seem, these remarks were rarely received with approbation by his hearers. For instance, a visitor said, one day, to his mother:

"Sis' Jones, w'atever yo' gwine to do wiv dat yere boy o' yourn?"

To which Maria, utterly oblivious of Jim Crow's presence, excitedly replied:

"Yo' ast me dat, Sis' Jackson? Yo' bettah ast me w'at he 's gwine to do wiv me. He 's dat obstrep'rous I 'se clean frustrated wiv him. I 'se made him a subjeck of prayer, I has; yaas, 'm; I 'se been down on my old knees, and prayed and prayed—"

Then came an emphatic young voice from under the table, saying:

"Why, Mee-ri er, yo' hain't prayed on yo' knees since befo' I was born!"

However, much as these happenings might amuse us up-stairs, they certainly did not endear him to his own people down-stairs, and time and again I had to fling the shield of my authority above little Jim Crow's head to save him from the

vengeful wrath of his buff and sullen sister. His mother was not to be feared. True, she "barked" loudly and often; but her "bite" was rare and exceeding mild, for you see she was his mother, even though he had never called her so. To him she was Maria, only he had the queerest way of saying it. He pronounced the name in three distinct syllables, drawling each one out, and making an absolute pause between the second and third, something like this: "Mee-ri er."

Poor old brown-black mother! who "never had no time down in Richmon', honey, to teach chilluns to say 'muver,' but was called by 'em jus' plain 'Maria.'"

Of all Jim Crow's long, long busy day, the dearest, sweetest moments were those he spent with the white children of the neighborhood. They were all the children of the rich or well-to-do, and the love and admiration for them that filled his honest little heart was something to wonder at. He would watch so longingly for them to come from school, and as they appeared

he would hug himself and stamp and shout with joy. Then he would rush out and turn a somersault before them, after which he would draw back to the sidewalk's edge, put his finger to his mouth, and smile deprecatingly at them. If they laughed, that was enough; he leaped, danced, sang, and wore himself completely out for their amusement.

Sometimes the boys would play a bit with him, when the child's joy was simply boundless. If one of them chanced to get dust or mud on his garment, Jim Crow would fly to the rescue, and with his quick and willing little hands rub away every vestige of soil, and then hug himself and laugh.

It was in December that I noticed a growing dullness or sadness on Jim Crow's part, and at about the same time I observed the absence of the usual noisy afternoon group of youngsters in front of the house. A few days after this, on returning from my drive, I was shocked to see crouched upon my door-step, shivering like a little homeless cur, my Jim Crow,

his woolly head bent down upon his knees, and all his little body shaken and strained by convulsive sobs. I lifted him, and led him, blindly stumbling as he walked, into the extension at the back of the dining-room, that we might be quite alone, and, taking off my cloak and hat, I began to question him.

Was he sick? A shake of his heavily drooping head was his only answer. Had his sister hurt him? Had his mother punished him? Still that vehement shake of the head, and still those dreadful sobs. At last I cried: "It 's Misery! Jim Crow, have you lost Misery?"

This time for answer he impatiently raised one hand and pointed through the window. I turned my head and looked, and there stood Misery on the fence, and her arched back and distended tail told me quite plainly she was well and about to try some new music.

What was I to do? The little fellow had fallen forward on my knee, and his grief was pitiful. For one moment Northern shrinking from the unaccustomed contact held me back, and then the

woman's pity for a grieving child conquered. He was but a baby, and I took him in my arms and let him hide his tear-stained, sodden little face upon my breast; and when I coaxed him once again to tell me what was the matter, he raised his poor drowned eyes one moment to my face, and gasped: "Oh, Miss Cla'h, dey, my little white cuzzens, won't speak to me any more!" then hid his face again in shame and sorrow. Oh, poor black baby! I had a hysterical desire to laugh at the queer degree of relationship he had claimed with the white children; yet, in spite of that desire, I saw two great tears shining on the woolly head upon my breast, and knew I must have shed them.

Oh, Jim Crow! Poor little man! The gall and wormwood that are ever mixed in black blood had risen that day for the first time to his child's lips, and he had tasted the bitterness thereof! The cruel lash of race had fallen for the first time across his baby shoulders, and the pain was the deeper because children's hands had given the blow!

Hitherto it had been an easy matter to

dispel Jim Crow's troubles. A kind word or two, a penny, a promise of a ride around to the stable on the coachman's box—all these had proved successful in the past; while for a whipping, a real old-fashioned warming, I had found nothing so soothing, so strengthening and sustaining, as a large piece of butter-scotch.

But now, alas! all these offers were rejected. I talked long and earnestly to him, telling him the white children cared for him as much as ever, only it was almost time for Santa Claus to come, and they could think of nothing else just now. "By and by they 'll—" But no; it would not do. One well-dressed little savage had struck Jim Crow aside with rough words, and called him a name which, when applied in anger or contempt, will cut to the very heart of any black man or woman in the world, and rankle there worse than any word of contempt or abuse in the English language—the name "Nigger."

I sat for a little, helpless; then I had a veritable inspiration.

"Jim Crow," I cried, "listen! No, no; it 's not about the children; it 's something else. I want to ask you something. Jim Crow, how big must a boy be to have a pair of long, red-topped boots?"

Like a flash came his answer:

"As big as me!"

At last victory perched on my banner. I had won his attention. At that very moment Misery began the first wailing notes of a duet with a friend in dark gray, who sat in the coal-box next door, and Jim Crow, rubbing his tearful eyes with his knuckles, proudly sighed:

"Mis'sy can yowl the loudest; can't she, Miss Cla'h?"

Needless to say, I agreed with him. I should have done so anyway; but really and truly Misery could out-yowl not only her young friend in gray and the old gentleman in rusty black,—who seemed to have charge of the church across the street, since he came from its basement every week-day in a dusty condition, and washed himself habitually on its lower steps,—but she could and did quite sing

down the only basso in the block, a red-haired party, through whose sensitive whiskers many a wintry blast had blown, whose torn and jagged ears and fiercely rounded yellow eyes betrayed more of his real nature than he could have wished.

So you see her master really had some grounds for his pride in Misery. Sometimes I thought he might be right in calling her a lucky cat. She had, you know, but one eye, and yet her power of watchfulness seemed double that of other ladies of her race. Her ability to dodge rapidly moving objects was remarkable, particularly when bodies were torn from their natural orbits, so to speak, and came hurtling through the air. On one occasion, very late at night, she was entertaining a friend on the veranda steps; perhaps she was a trifle noisy about it. At any rate, a third-story neighbor hurled a great common soap-dish at Misery's head; and she, feeling that her friend could see this danger with two eyes as well as she could see it with one eye, said nothing, but calmly leaped aside, and let the dish go

whack into the visitor's ribs! Many things were broken that night: a commandment, the soap-dish, a friendship, and three ribs.

I had encouraged Jim Crow to speak as much as he would of Misery's virtues and talents. She had fewer of the first than the last, I fear. The conversation was beginning to lag when that occurred which put an end to it. The duet was interrupted by the swift passing of about three fourths of a large arctic overshoe. Even here Misery showed her superior nerve; for while her friend in the gray suit sprang wildly into an abandoned wash-boiler for protection, Misery, with truly French aplomb, held her position on the fence-top, spitting at all hands with an energy that bordered on ferocity.

I saw Jim Crow's mind was returning to his trouble, so I hastily brought the boot question forward again. Once more I caught his attention, and we proceeded to discuss most thoroughly the question of dress.

I am afraid I did not understand him as

well as usual, for his excited and minute description of what he most admired in clothing left the impression on my mind that he desired greatly a suit composed entirely of buttons.

Our interview finally ended in a double-barreled promise. One barrel was Jim Crow's vow not to make any advance whatever to the white children, but to answer nicely should they speak to him first. In return, I promised to buy on the very next day a suit of clothes for Jim Crow, allowing him to select his own store and his own suit. This being settled, the little fellow slipped from my lap, made me his profound bow, and left the room. In a moment I heard him whizz down the banisters on the way to the kitchen.

Next forenoon I sallied forth, one hand holding a pocket-book, the other leading a little black imp, whose gleaming teeth, flashing eyes, and roguish face caused every one to smile who looked at him; and many turned to look again.

Once he released my hand, and for a

moment disappeared behind me; but almost directly he was back, holding my fingers tightly, and dancing along the pavement at my side. It was very shortly after this that I noticed a decided broadening in the smiles we met, and then, yes, the smiles became laughter behind us. What was it? I glanced at my reflection in the windows. My attire seemed all right; nothing coming off, nothing sticking to me. No; it was Jim Crow they were laughing at; but why?

Suddenly I asked him to run ahead a few steps, and then I saw—I saw a great tear in the seat of his tiny trousers, and through this tear there jubilantly waved upon the chilly air a—snow-white flag of truce.

With burning cheeks I shunted Jim Crow into a side street, exclaiming, "Oh, Jim Crow! why did n't your sister mend your trousers before you came out?"

"She did mend 'em wiv a pin, but de pin stick-ed me so, I pulled it out a ways back!" answered my small friend. Then, seeing me still vexed, he added affably:

"It don' hurt now, Miss Cla'h, and de wind ain't col' a bit."

Having sought and found the privacy of some one's hallway, I knelt down and mended the smallest pair of trousers I ever saw with the very biggest safety-pin I ever happened to own. Never mind; the flag of truce was withdrawn from the gaze of a startled people, and Jim Crow's little carcass was not "stick-ed."

So once more we put on a brave front and faced the avenue. I was not very strong in those days, and could not walk far, so I had three several times attempted to enter clothing-stores we were passing—big, well-stocked places, too; but, "No, no, no!" Jim Crow cried, dragging me violently away; he wanted to go to the "big glass stor'."

"But," said I, "they do not sell clothes at a glass-store."

"Yes, Miss Cla'h, they does; more clo's than eber you saw dey sells. Oh, please, please! It ain't far now, shur'ly, shur'ly, not far now, Miss Cla'h!"

So wearily I walked on, till at Twenty-

third Street, when I was ready to faint from fatigue, he suddenly let go my hand that he might hug himself, and then, pointing across the street to the Grand Opera House, he shouted:

"Dar she is, Miss Cla'h; dar 's de big glass stor'. I guess I git buttons dar!"

Sure enough, the ground floor of the great building was then occupied by a clothing firm, and the marble, the gilding, and the enormous show-windows had won from Jim Crow enthusiastic admiration and the title of the "glass store."

When we went in there were several ladies at different counters examining children's garments, but they soon left their own shopping to assist at Jim Crow's. For he it was who gave the orders, and his lordly and pompous manner, taken in conjunction with his infinitesimal size, was really very funny.

One salesman had waited upon him at first, but presently two were busy trying to meet his demands without strangling with laughter. I had fallen into the first seat that presented itself, and having told

the clerk that I would be responsible for anything the child selected, I had, as it were, turned Jim Crow loose in the great store; and he was running things to suit himself, while I tried to get a little rest, and offered up a humble prayer that the safety-pin might not belie its name.

But somehow things did not go right. Those two salesmen brought forth clothing enough for a small regiment of boys, but nothing suited Jim Crow. His contemptuous remarks convulsed his hearers, but he paid no heed to bystanders. At last there seemed cause for hope. A little blue suit with a great quantity of white braid and stitching seemed for a moment to please him; but when it was opened out he suddenly swept it aside with his arm, and casting dignity to the winds, he ran to me and buried his disappointed little face in my dress.

"What is it, Jim Crow?" I asked. "Can't you find what you want?"

He shook his head, and then, turning his flashing, tearful eyes upon the salesman, he exclaimed:

"Ain't you got no *buttons* in all dis big stor' ?"

Then a third salesman came up, and murmured something to the others about "suit, a model; not successful, too showy," etc., and they nodded their heads and went smilingly away, and presently returned with a small suit in which the cloth seemed to serve simply as a necessary foundation on which to sew brass buttons.

Jim Crow looked, and the next instant, in spite of my restraining touch, he was walking swiftly down the store on his hands to meet them.

He hugged himself, he hugged the clothes, and was desperately determined to put them on then and there. At last I got them away from him long enough to have them and the accompanying cap done up. But no sending of that package home. "No, no, no!" He would carry it. Oh, he must! He must!

As we turned to go one of the salesmen attempted to open the door for me; but with a frowning face Jim Crow swept him aside, and laying his bundle on the floor,

he stood on tiptoe and opened the door himself, using both little hands to do it; then, taking off the crown of his hat, he bowed me out, bowed to the ladies, took up his bundle, and danced to my side; and so, amid laughter from the men, and such exclamations from the ladies as "How lovely!" "Oh, what a cunning little fellow!" we made our homeward start.

I think we left an unbroken wake of smiles behind us as we moved. Once, however, Jim Crow found himself stirred to wrath. A great big white boy of about twelve years, I should say, laughed jeeringly at him, and cried loudly:

"Sa-ay, bundle, where yer goin' with that kid?"

Jim Crow stopped stock-still, and literally glared at the boy for a moment, while I felt his hand tremble in mine. Then he resumed his walk at my side in frowning silence.

We were nearly home before he spoke; then, giving a great sigh, he said, looking up brightly into my face:

"I 'se gwine to know dat trash boy

when I sees him ag'in, I is." (Here came another and a bigger sigh—one of evident satisfaction.) "Yaas, Miss Cla'h; I 'se gwine to lick dat boy clear into frazzles."

"Why, Jim Crow! What for?" I cried, while my mind's eye saw a picture of a sparrow fighting a turkey-cock.

"What foh?" echoed the mite; then, drawing himself up and throwing back his shoulders, he continued: "What foh? Why, foh 'sultin' me when I 'se walkin' wiv a lady."

I had, of course, nothing more to offer, and, as frequently happened during our acquaintance, Jim Crow had the last word.

As I went up the front steps, he hurled himself down the basement-way, and before the front door closed upon me, I heard a Comanche-like yell, followed by the oft-repeated word, "Boots! boots! boots!" and knew that my lord and master had added the final drop to Jim Crow's surely overflowing cup of bliss.

Presently he stood shyly before me, finger to lip, but with his happy, dancing eyes watching for the effect his finery

would have upon me. And how pretty the little scamp looked! The suit that had been too showy for a white child became him perfectly. Yes; from long, big man's boots, blue cloth, gold cord, and innumerable buttons, to the cap, worn hind-side before "because it felt just like ole hat that-a-way," all was charming.

After he had been duly admired, he failed to make his bow and retire, as I had expected him to do. Instead, he lingered shamefacedly. Evidently something was wrong. I noticed, too, that he was trembling. "Too much excitement," thought I. "He will be sick if I am not careful"; so I said to him:

"Jim Crow, you 've had no nap to-day. Had you not better lie down now, and sleep a little?"

"Dars n't," was his instant answer.

"Dare not?" I cried. "Why, what do you mean?"

He hesitated a moment; then, grasping my skirts with both hands, as he always did when in trouble, he cried almost wildly:

"Dey wants to take 'em off, Miss Cla'h! You won't let 'em, will you, Miss Cla'h? You won't let 'em?"

"But, my dear," I said, "you must take them off sometimes, you know."

His voice rose to a positive shriek: "No; oh, please, please, no! If I take 'em off w'ile dey 's new, sister 'll carry 'em off and sell 'em, every one!"

Poor little man! Not five years old, and such sad knowledge gleaned already from the great field of life! I took his hand and led him down-stairs, where, in his presence, I requested his mother and sister to leave him in peace, that he might enjoy his outfit in his own way.

His faith in the honor of his family was not of a robust nature, for at eight o'clock he entreated "Mee-ri er" to let him go to bed by his "loneself. No; he was not afeard. No; he did n't wan' no light; he could see from the hall. No, no, no! he did n't want sister to put him to bed." So for the first time he clambered alone up those four long flights of stairs, and put his "loneself" to bed.

At 11 P. M., hearing laughter from the upper rooms, and fearing some one might be teasing the child, I went up. The light had been turned on full, and there, with Misery sleeping by his side, lay Jim Crow. One little hand rested on Misery's neck; the other—ah! but it was sad to see—the other rested close to his throat, where it tightly clutched the fastening of his jacket. Yes, his jacket; for his sister at that moment roughly stripped the bedclothes down. He was in bed completely clothed, literally from top to toe; for not only had he his boots on, but, having absolutely no faith in his family, he had for further safety tied his cap on with a piece of twine.

'T was well I was there when the undressing took place, for I really believe the child would have had a fit, so great was his passion and his terror. I finally calmed him down by placing every article, boots and all, under his pillow, he smilingly declaring: "De humps dey cause make me feel good, 'ca'se I know den dey is dar."

I had been mildly reproved by one of

my family for giving so lavishly to Jim Crow when Christmas was so near, and asked why I did not wait till then? As far as giving a reason went, I had no reason to give; only that "something" that so often says to me "Do!" or "Do not do!" and which I have so often and so recklessly ignored to my sorrow, had this time been listened to, and to this day I am grateful to that "something" because it kept murmuring to me, "If you are going to do anything for Jim Crow, perhaps you had better do it now. Why wait?"

I would not wait; I would do it *now!* And I pat my own back (as far as I can reach) in self-approval that, in spite of common sense and excellent reasons, I obeyed "something."

Gross neglect of duty on the part of the sullen buff sister had often been overlooked for Jim Crow's sake, and she presumed on that to add impertinence to her score; but one day too much liquor and a narrowly averted conflagration caused the dismissal of them all. The head of the house, having in alarmed anger given this order, left

the city for the night on business, or things might have ended differently.

So when darkness came there issued from the basement door the red-brown brother carrying bundles; he was followed by the buff bane of the family, the sulky sister, carrying more bundles; and following her was Maria, the mother, weary, angry, and full of foreboding for their future; she carried yet another bundle.

But Jim Crow never moved a step. He stood in the center of the room, clutching firmly the edge of the large table. His lips were tightly pressed together, and his eyes were dull and heavy.

Maria called loudly for him to "come along yere!"

He never moved. She came back, and, looking through the window, motioned for him to come. He never moved. Then the angry woman tossed her bundle to one of the others, and rushed back. As she entered, the little fellow lifted frightened eyes, and said in deprecating tones:

"Let 's wait, Mee-ri er; per'aps de boss may cum right in now, an' tell me I can't go!"

"He 's tol' us all to go!" snapped Maria.

"Not me!" said Jim Crow. "I 'se always stood by de boss, an' now he 's gwine to stan' by me. I guess I know! Oh, Mee-ri er, Mee-ri er! don't—don't!"

Two sharp, quick, agonized cries broke from his grayish lips as Maria forced his little hands from their hold upon the table; then she gathered him up in her fierce, strong arms, and so went out of the basement door with this—their last bundle.

Those two piercing, all-abandoning cries had reached even to the floor above.

"What 's that?" I cried, and running to the parlor window, I caught a glimpse of a shadowy figure with a child over its shoulder. As they moved from me, for one chill moment the light fell full upon two straining, upraised eyes, and two piteous, pale little palms held vainly out to those five stories of stony silence; and then a great wave of inky darkness swept over them, and carried from me and mine, far out on the briny, bitter ocean of life, my little Jim Crow.

MY PIRATE

MY PIRATE

THIS name was Ezra Martin, and undoubtedly he was a pirate. When he was away, and I thought of him suddenly, little cold creepies went all up and down my back, and when he came home and held out his hand to me, something jumped quick right up from my side into my throat, and choked me—he frightened me so lovely, ever so much better than ghost-stories.

The strange thing was that in that house full of grown-ups no one *else* seemed to know that he was a pirate. Of course, at that time he was an engineer on the Lake Shore Road, but he had been a sailor, and had sailed clear round the whole world, and had crossed somebody's line, and doubled capes, and had killed whales that have corset-bones and lamp-oil in

them, and thrown harpoons, and dragged anchors, and had seen monkeys without hand-organs, and parrots that knew nothing about crackers, flying about wild in real woods. And he was swarthy dark, with black hair and black, *black* little eyes, that always had a tiny red spark in them. And he wore gold ear-rings! Pirates always do that—always! And his beard? Oh, Captain Kidd, in my picture-book, had quite a common, *honest*-looking beard, compared to Ezra's great, bushy, *wicked*-looking one. And he had a long scar across his forehead, and he never wore a white shirt or an overcoat. He always wore dark-blue clothes. His trousers were very tight at the knee and very wide at the top, and he seemed to have a lot of trouble to keep them from falling off, 'cause he was hitching them up nearly every time he moved. He wore blue-flannel shirts, and in winter a thing he called a "pilot-jacket." And he carried a big knife in a leather sheath, and the knife had spots on the blade—ugh!

Of course he was very brave,—pirates

have to be,—but anyway I heard one of the boarders say "Ezra was the bravest man he ever saw, because he dared to call the landlady mother right to her very face." She was n't his mother; she was n't anybody's mother—which was a good thing for *some*body. She had just married old Mr. Martin, and he died very soon; then, when she was Ezra's stepmother, Ezra turned pirate.

I was afraid of her. I slept in a trundle-bed in her room, and she came apart so. She put her hair on the bedpost, and her teeth in a glass. I always covered up my head then, for fear she might do something to her eyes—lay them on the mantelpiece, perhaps, which would have scared me to death! Ezra told me not to be afraid of her when she raved and scolded so. He said she was all right, only I must n't rub her the wrong way; and when, on my word of honor, I assured him I had never, *never* rubbed her *any* way at all, he roared with laughter, and slapped his leg, and "shivered his timbers," as pirates always do.

But besides being an engineer and pirate, he was a living picture-gallery. Yes, just that. Every other Sunday he was my panorama. He would turn slowly about, showing me all the lovely pictures prickled on his chest and shoulders and back and arms, in blue and red and green inks. And he 'd explain himself as he turned. And we were so sorry, both of us, that he could n't show me a lovely pair of turtles he had on his legs, but his trousers were too tight at the knee, and that was just where they were.

The first time he held out his big hand to me, and I saw a great, scaly dragon on it blowing red venom up his sleeve, I knew he was a pirate; not because of the ink,—lots of people wear dots and stars and things,—but because of the dragon. My pirate was lovely up his back, particularly where the lady with the tiny waist and flounced skirt waved the flag on his left shoulder. She was a blue lady, and the flag was red and blue. And under that—"to balance the lady," he said—was a coiled-up snake that made me rather sick,

which was silly, of course; but it had such a surprising amount of forked tongue, and really, you don't know how snaky it looked. I liked better the big eagle on his right shoulder, which Ezra said was "a noble old bird."

Though he was such an interesting man, my pirate spoke very little to the grown-ups. Indeed, with one exception, he was the most silent person I ever knew. I make the exception in favor of a young friend who was born dumb. And I was very proud when he would draw me to his knee, and teach me to tell time by his big gold watch, though, at the same moment, fright at being so near the sheath-knife sent goose-flesh all over my arms. When he gave me those lessons, he always sat on the edge of the wood-box behind the stove in the sitting-room. He never sat on a chair, if he could help it, except at table. He always seemed most comfortable and most cheerful when he sat on something with a very sharp edge. When he was away I tried to sit on the same things, but they brought tears to my eyes.

On the porch, he always sat on the railing; in the sitting-room, on the edge of the wood-box; in the kitchen, he was so happy if he could find a full wash-tub, for that gave him such a nice, sharp edge to sit on, and then he would always talk to me. All his best stories he told me from that tub, and one ugly one about the unnatural *cat* they had on the ship he used to sail on. I had said, "I did not know sailors had pet cats on board," and he said: "There was but one cat, but it was quite enough, and I would hardly like to call it a pet, even though it was more popular with the officers than with the men." I asked if it was a pretty cat, and he pulled his big beard hard and said: "Well, no; he was strong and remarkably well made, but I would not care to call a cat-o'-nine-tails a pretty creature."

Of course I cried out that a cat could not have nine tails; but he said their cat had—that he had seen them with his own eyes; and he added, after a little pause, "I came mighty near feeling them, too."

"Would he have scratched you?" I asked.

And Ezra said: "Scratched? Would he have scratched me, child? He would have cut the skin from my body! But there, don't look so frightened. There are very few of those cats left now; the race is almost gone."

I began to pick up some of his words, from talking with him so much, and one day he was so tired he fell asleep, and by and by I called: "Mr. Ezra, wake up, please; all hands have been piped down to supper." And after that he always called me "Mate."

That made me very happy; but one thing worried me all the time: I wanted him to understand that I knew he was a pirate, and that that dreadful fact made no difference in my affection for him; but whenever I 'd try to give him a hint I 'd get frightened and stop.

He taught me, too, how to tie a hangman's knot, a sailor's knot, and to make figures; and at last, one day when I was lonely, and had tied my apron-strings into a hangman's knot, and had had my hands slapped for doing it, unhappiness made

me bold, and when my pirate came, I looked right into his glittery eye and asked: "If you please, how did you use to make people 'walk the plank'?"

Of course he understood then that I knew his secret. His hand went up to his beard, he looked at me a moment, then he stooped down and brushed off his trouser's leg, and his shoulders shook, and I saw that he was frightened; so I got quite close to him, and put my hand in his, and after a minute he said: "Well, Mate, I 'll get a bit of board, and show you right here in this tub of water, with that chopping-bowl for a ship, if you 'll furnish a passenger to drown."

My china doll was too little and light, he said, so I got a bottle, and filled it with salt, and dressed it in my handkerchief, ready to meet its awful doom; and then—and then that most piratical proceeding known as "walking the plank" was made so thrillingly plain to me that when the plank dipped and my passenger went down into the bluing-water depths, I gave a scream that brought out three or

four grown-ups to see what had happened to me.

He was always kind to helpless or distressed things, yet, being a pirate, he had to do some swearing, though it was mostly sailor swearing, which is quite different from just common land swearing, which, of course, is very wicked indeed. He told me a good deal about the first kind, one day, while he sat on the sharp-edged barrel with its head knocked in. He said it was not wickedness, but necessity, made the sailor swear—that you could n't keep the finest ship ever built on a straight course without swearing at her. Then he very kindly explained the meaning of some of their swear-words. For instance, he said: "To call a man in anger a 'son of a sea-cook' meant generally a few days in a hospital for the one that did the calling. To blast a man's eyes—just a plain 'Blast your eyes!'—meant 'Don't do that again, or I 'll lick you'; but to blast his 'tarry top-lights' meant he was far enough out of your reach to keep you from breaking every bone in his body, as you 'd like

to do." He also remarked that if any sailor was ever known as "Bilge-water Jack, or Bill," that did n't mean that he was the dandy or the "howlin' swell" of the ship. As to the land swears, he scarcely ever used them; and I used to think that if he had suspenders, and did n't have to hitch his trousers so much, perhaps he would n't swear at all.

I think I said he was an engineer on the Lake Shore Road then, but I did n't say how much he cared for his engine. He always called it "Betsy," and he used to say she enjoyed having her toilet made as much as any lady would. He was very angry, one day, when one of the firemen called her "Cranky 44," and I remember he blasted the fireman's eyes, and top-lights, and almost everything he had about him; for Ezra said it was the idiotic tomfoolery of just such lubbers as he was that spoiled Betsy's temper. "Why, Mate," he said, "when she 's just been cleaned and polished and oiled and properly fed, she 'll fairly smile at you. She 's the prettiest thing that comes out

of that roundhouse, and I suppose she knows it—being no fool—and wants to be treated right. Every man on the road knows that 44 works all right for me, but with the others she *is* cranky, and with one or two of them she 'll jerk and plunge and rock and slide, and act like the very devil; and one of these days she 'll smash one of 'em, you see if she don't. Anyway, I wish those two fellows could be kept away from her. They are more fit for slave-drivers than engine-drivers, with their jerking and pulling and yanking right at the very start out. It takes me days to get Betsy quieted down and running right again—taking hold of the rail and sweeping along smooth as satin, swift as lightning. When she 's sane and in her right mind she understands the responsibility we share between us; for you see, Matey, it 's not freight, but human beings, we 're dragging around curves and across trestles, and they are all trusting us so; and the very worst of Betsy is that when her back 's up she don't care a—well, she don't care where in—well, she

don't care how many people she may hurt, so long as she smashes the one person she 's got it in for."

Then, one day, Mr. Ezra came in looking awful bad. Why, he sat right down in a chair, and stayed there for a minute or two before he found it out, so, of course, that showed that something bad had happened. And just as he was seated on the wood-box Mrs. Martin came in, and he looked up and said: "Well, mother, Betsy 's done it this time. Her reputation 's gone now, I suppose, for good. She smashed big Tom Jones last night—both legs broken, fireman hurt, track torn up I don't know how many feet, and—what 's the matter with my hand? Oh, that 's from knocking over one of the boys who was already calling Betsy 'Bloody 44.'"

He felt very bad about the accident, and for several days he scarcely spoke even to me; but his next Sunday was at our end of the line, and when I came from Sunday-school he shouted out: "Ship ahoy! Cast anchor, Mate, and spin us a yarn about your cruise in church waters."

And I *was* glad. After a while I asked him how Betsy was, and he shook his head and said: "Bad, Matey, bad! She 's strained worse than they think she is, and she 's as nervous as a runaway horse that knows it 's killed its master. She won't mind me yet, no matter how gentle I am, but jumps and snorts and takes her curves, only holding the inner rails, while her outer wheels go whirling in the air." He shook his head again, and sat on the edge of the box in frowning silence. I leaned against him, and softly turned back and forth the gold ring in his ear. At last he heaved a great sigh and said: "Well, what is to be *will* be. I 'm mighty fond of Betsy, and she may smash me, if she wants to. But she must n't smash the men and women behind me. No; she must n't expect me to back up her tantrums *that* far."

Then, to change the subject to something pleasant, as he said, he showed me how to tattoo people with India-ink and a needle, explained the nature and use of a belaying-pin, and took some

trouble to convince me that "spankers" were not things carried for the correction of disobedient children. After that he told me to "lay a straight course to the woodhouse" and he would show me how to harpoon a whale, adding that the information might be useful to me sometime. Rather foolishly I said: "Why, Mr. Ezra, there is no whale." And he scowled awfully, and asked: "Do I look like a lubber that asks people to a harpoonin' where there 's nothin' to harpoon?" And he hitched his trousers so hard, I thought they 'd go clear up to his shoulders, and told me to "heave ahead," when I was so scared I could scarcely stand.

But, lo and behold! the sitting-room carpet, that came home from the cleaners too late on Saturday to be put down, lay in a great big roll out in the woodhouse, making a lovely whale. So, with pieces of clothes-line about our waists, tied to the boarders' canes for harpoons, we boldly left our big ship, entered our open boat, and attacked the monster. My harpoon struck 'most anything except the whale.

But he said the sea was heavy, and young whalers often had that luck. But he was mad when I excitedly told him my oar was caught in the beast's gills; and he walked right off the whale's back, and across the blood-stained waves, and boxed my ears, when I said the whale was "squirting" instead of "spouting." Still, it was a lovely, lovely day—we never guessing it was our last. We lost two or three of our crew, and had our boat stove in. Indeed, few whales make so stubborn a fight for life as this one did; and he had just stopped churning the reddened waves when our dinner-bell rang, and, hot and happy, I rowed back to our big ship. And as we went to dinner Mr. Ezra promised that on his next trip home he would show me how pirates were said to "run down" and "board" a rich merchantman. "Oh," I cried, "that would be too good to come true!"

But, alas! my words were to come true. I had on my clean apron, and I was watching for my pirate's return on his next trip home, when a strange man came in, all

torn and crumpled and dirty, with cuts on his pale face, and his arm in a sling. And he asked for Mrs. Martin, and he said: "I 'm Ezra's fireman, mum, and—and—" And then he stopped, and his eyes went all about the walls, but would n't look at her at all. And she sat down so hard the windows rattled, and she said: "You 're Ezra's fireman, you say? Then what are you here for? What 's happened? What 's the matter? Are you clean dumb?"

I touched the man, and in a small voice gasped: "Please, is it Betsy? Has she hurt Mr. Ezra?"

And he said: "Yes, curse her!"

And Mrs. Martin said then: "He 's dead, I suppose?"

But the crumpled, dirty man said: "No, he is n't dead, but he wishes he was. You see, it was this way: He would n't leave the engine. I saw what was coming; so did he. I called, 'Jump! jump for your life, Ez!' He had one hand on the lever; with the other he gave a hitch to his breeches, and he shouted:

'Jump and be d—d! I stand between Betsy and the people behind!'

"I jumped then, and am here all right. Ezra stood at his post and went down in the crash. The people he saved are all calling him *hero*, but he 's as blind as a stone. It was the steam, you know, that did it. For God's sake, take that child to her mother, if she 's got one!"

Oh, it was dreadful! Mr. Ezra lying so still in the bed, and the room so dark, and the mediciny smell always there. And then, when the light was let in, and the smell of drugs went away, I used to creep in as stealthily as a little cat, and watch him, and cry and cry; and sometimes, thinking he was all alone, he would roll his head and say: "God! God!"

Then, one day, he heard me sniff, I suppose, for he said, quick and sharp: "Who is it? Who 's there, I say?" And I said: "Only Matey, sir." And he held out his hand to me, and I came and sat on the bed, and we talked and talked; and after that he called for me every day, and I am

dreadfully afraid that I put on airs about it, though I hope not.

Then a day came when I had to tell my dear pirate good-by. He was well again, and had already picked up many of the pathetic tricks of the blind. He was going to the far, *far* West, where, with a friend, he had a small interest in a mine, and the friend thought that, even as he was, Ezra's knowledge of engines would be of use.

The carriage stood at the door. Every one had said good-by. I followed him through the hall to the porch. He turned in the doorway and shook hands a second time with Mrs. Martin, whose false front was all crooked and whose face was working. I had a great weight on my chest and a pain in my throat. I did not know what they meant then, but I thought he was forgetting me.

Suddenly he stopped and held out his hands vaguely before him, and said softly: "Matey—I thought I heard Matey's patter behind me in the hall. Are you here, Mate?"

I was at his knee in a moment, and then

he stooped, and my arms were around his neck in a strangling hug. My face was buried in his great, black beard. My pirate, whom I loved, and of whom I had but one doubt. Oh, if that doubt could be driven away! He tried to rise, but I held him fast. This was my last chance. I raised my face, I gulped, I gasped out my question. "Dear Mr. Ezra," I said, "when —you—were—a—pirate—did—did"—I almost choked over it—"did you ever make any lady passengers walk the plank?"

He hid his face in my neck a moment. Then, in a shaking voice, he said: "Mate, I give you my solemn affadavy that I never, in my goriest hour, made a gentle female thing walk the plank, or held the poisoned bowl to her lips, nor the dagger to her throat; and that's the truth." And then he straightened up and burst into a laugh that fairly shook him from head to foot.

The man waiting at the carriage door said: "Come, Ez, you 'll be late."

He felt his way down the two steps to the sidewalk. He stopped; the laugh was

gone. He turned and silently held out his arms. I sprang and caught him about the neck. He held me with one arm; he passed his hand over my hair, my face. He whispered: "Such an honest little craft!"

He kissed me twice, then put up his hands, loosened mine, and gently set me down, and looking in his face, I saw from his poor, scarred, closed lids two tears slip down and hide themselves in his great beard. I just heard his "Good-by, little Mate!" and then he was at the wrong place by the carriage, and the man caught his arm and pulled him to the door, and Mr. Ezra hitched his trousers and stepped in and was gone.

That he never killed any woman on the sea shows he was a kind man—though, for all that, of course you see for yourself that he had been a pirate.

"SHINS"

"SHINS"

HEN I hear the word "philanthropist" there springs up in my mind the picture of a large, clean, white- or silvery-haired man, with a strong gleam of gold about him. Perhaps it 's spectacles, perhaps it 's chain, perhaps it 's only teeth—a sort of gold-filled smile; but there 's gold about him somewhere. Now, it never occurred to me till the other day that a philanthropist was not born in that state of gold-gleaming plumpness and grayness, already ripe, so to speak, but that back of him there must have been a dark-haired, lean man of energy, and still farther back a boy. A boy? Good heavens! a boy and a philanthropist? They are farther apart than the poles. And yet, and yet, the other day I saw an embryo philanthropist; I 'm sure I did; and he was—but let me

tell you all about it. I know him, you see. His name is Brown—Jimmy Brown; but he is called "Shins." His mother lives in what she, poor soul, calls a "tenement-flat"; but Shins lives in the street. He is small, he is dirty, and he has just reached that age where he is denounced by every living creature, save his confederates and the generally blamed mother who bore him. With a strong prejudice against clothing of any kind, he has been coerced into wearing portions of two small garments—shirt and trousers. But doing it against his will makes him ever ready to cast them from him upon the slightest excuse. Therefore he takes all his baths in public places, selecting usually some stream commanded by the windows of crowded passenger-cars—though the basin of a park fountain has received his patronage, when he was too hurried to go farther afield, in search of greater publicity.

In the invention and practice of nerve-destroying noises, Shins "beats de band." Could Dante have heard the sounds produced by Shins through one long sum-

mer's day, the great Italian's commodious, varied, and ingenious hell would have been the richer by one more torture, I am sure.

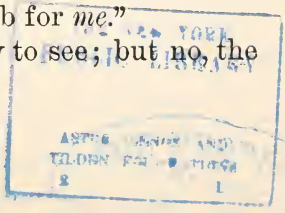
The sole tie that binds Shins to the human race is his mother. Without that tie he would be an imp, pure and simple —a creature of torment; in short, a small devil. But being so little, hunger and stress of weather still send him home occasionally, and he therefore remembers some of her peculiarities: how she had his father larrup him, once, for cruelty to a caged rat; how she looked at him with her tired gray eyes, shining through big tears, the day he pulled off the fly's wings. And he wonders why the tear-filled eyes hurt worse than the licking did. And he can remember, too, how she nursed and fed a poor homeless cat whom one of the neighbors had heartlessly injured—this mother, who had tried hard to make him truthful. But Shins finds truth-telling incompatible with a high position in "de gang," so, to compromise matters, he lies when occasion demands, but promptly licks any other boy who *says* he lies.

Now, the other day, while the hot wave was with us, for my sins I had to visit the city—so I thought, going down. Coming home I changed my mind, as that visit had brought to me my discovery. It was the second dreadful day, and Mrs. Brown, noticing the signs of sleeplessness and suffering in the face of her small savage, Jamesie, had withdrawn from her hard-earned capital the sum of three pennies, which she had placed in his hot little fist, telling him he might treat himself. And Shins's dull eyes had brightened quickly. He flung his arms about his mother's knees in a rough embrace, and dashed, whooping, down the stairs, and off on a wild chase after a "hoky-poky" man—the puissant lord of that push-cart in which a battered and dingy ice-cream can is high enthroned.

In his search he was attended by a number of "de gang," who followed him as fast as various stages of stone-bruises would permit. Not that they had pennies to spend for themselves, but because they liked to see "de deal," and there was al-

ways a small chance of "swipin'" a bit of ice from "de cart—see?" They were on the corner of Fourth Avenue and a down-town cross-street when word came from a flying messenger that the "hoker-poker" was coming, so they rested there, waiting; and as Shins wiped his streaming face on his sleeve, he noticed a boy near him with an enormous slice of bread in his hand. It was not only thickly buttered, but it was fairly covered with a mighty cut of meat. The bare sight of it, this hot day, sickened him. He turned his head away and looked straight into the face of a famishing dog, who stood—a living longing—before the boy with the monster sandwich. Shins, trying not to see, turned his glance down the avenue. No use; he saw the ridgy rib-bones, the mangy marks on the yellowish-brown coat; saw how the sad, sagging tail gave a piteous little deprecating quiver now and then, that seemed to say: "Yes—y-es—I th-i-n-k a crumb is go-ing to co-me my way *this* time—a crumb for *me*."

Shins turned quickly to see; but no, the



boy gave no crumb, though the strained, bright eyes upon him were anguished, and the creature swallowed convulsively at each bite the boy slowly took.

At that moment a wild shout proclaimed the appearance of the hoky-poky man. Great excitement followed. The boys swarmed about the cart. Shins secured his coveted morsel of icy delight, and hoping a great big hope that the dog might be gone, turned round to see him limping after them, his nose high in air, following the maddening scent of the meat; and, to cap the climax, just at that moment the creature staggered and nearly fell on the blistering stones. Shins shut his teeth hard one instant; then, turning back his lips, contemptuously he shouted out his really splendid lie:

"Y-ah!" he yelled, "y-ah! dis cold sweet stuff 's only fit for gals! When I eat, I wants to eat meat, de stuff w'at gives a feller muscle. Say, you Soapy! do yer want to make a deal? I 'll swap dis sweet mess wid yer—if you 'll swap even—fer yer hunk of bread an' meat."

Did Soapy want to swap? Did not Soapy (so called because he was the dirtiest boy in the ward) know a good thing when he saw it? A moment more and the cream had changed hands. Shins had the bread and meat, and with wild whoops of pretended satisfaction, he dashed down the side-street, the mangy, wavering, panting dog, with hope almost gone from his eyes, forced by gnawing hunger still to follow.

The "gang" remained by the cart, and at the first area-way Shins turned in, and, with a look of loathing, cast the food upon the stones, where the following hunger found and with faint growling fell upon and devoured it.

But Shins—poor little heat-worn Shins! Every separate nerve in his city-sick little body cried passionately for that moment of refreshment,—that icy, icy, icy touch upon his dry, parched lips,—and it was gone. Soapy was eating it. He could not help it. His arm was against the area gate, his dirty, weary little face was buried in it, and he cried as if his impulsive little

heart would break—cried until a small noise attracted his attention. He looked around, and through his tears saw the dog had already finished his real work, and was now attending to a few details, such as picking up the widely scattered crumbs and carefully licking the butter off his upper lip.

The lightning quickness of the whole performance so delighted Shins that he cried out: "Well, you are a high roller!" And as the dog wagged a pleased assent to the assertion, Shins told him to "com' on" and he 'd get him a drink.

I saw them at a leaky hydrant. Shins had caught some water in his torn old hat, and the "high roller" drank and drank; and as Shins was telling him how easy it was for a smart dog to learn to walk on his hind legs, I looked long and carefully into his tear-brightened eyes, shining above his dirty, streaky cheeks,—looked long and carefully, as one should look who finds something great in embryo,—and there surely is a future philanthropist in this little street gamin, Shins.

"MY MR. EDWARD"

"MY MR. EDWARD"

DON'T know why my thoughts should travel so far backward to-day—why I am forced to dwell upon these early memories, so broken, yet so vivid. Is it because the rain is falling? Not the warm, sweet rain of April; not the fierce, black rain of November: but the soft, sad, tear-like rain of early autumn, through which the loosened yellow leaves fall in heavy silence to the sodden earth. Perhaps. Or perhaps I have gazed too long, too steadily, upon the bit of iron foolishness standing on the table here before me, knowing its great cost,—poor little toy flat-iron, made to press a dolly's wardrobe,—and remembering, as I must remember all my life, the day the awful price was paid, and it became my property. Perhaps!

Curious things early childish memories

are, too. There will be some event remembered with astonishing clearness, even words of unknown meaning being recalled; then there comes a hiatus; then another memory, unconnected, all accepted, as we accept our dreams, calmly, as a matter of course—as when in sleep, without surprise, one gathers superb flowers, having waded through snow to reach them, or receives with serene dignity the highest personages in the land in a costume of such shocking limitations that were one awake one would shriek even to her maid to keep out of the room.

So in this, my earliest of memories, I was there. I know no "hows" or "whys." I was just there, and I found it good.

The house was big and white, the lake was big and blue. The rain never fell, the wind never blew, and the sun always shone—"'ceptin' when I was asleep." Naturally, the sun would not shine while I slept.

I had at this time three different ways to get down-stairs. One was to stand at the top and call—roar, if need were—till help

came. The second way was to turn my back to the staircase, lie down flat-face, and wriggle down, the greater part of the labor coming upon the elbows and stomach. The third was the quickest, though it never met with the full approval of my elders. It was, too, the simplest. I had only to look for a moment, then fall down; and being a very roly-poly young person, damages were always slight, sometimes *nil*.

I do not know how old I was, but judging from my peculiar way of treating staircases, and from the fact that the letter *r* was entirely eliminated from my conversation, I am led to believe that my years were exceeding few.

When I think of this time I always loiter; because in this little incident lies my whole childhood—the only time in all my life in which I knew not care; for when I had passed my fifth mile-stone of life I was an anxious little woman, and Pain and Poverty walked on either side of me and held my hands firmly clasped in theirs. But let that pass. I say that I

was then very young and, thank God, very happy.

My family (I called them all mine) was composed of white-haired Judge Walden and his wife and their son and daughter, whom I always referred to as "my Mr. Judge," and "my Mrs. Judge," "my Miss Kate" and "my Mr. Edward."

I loved them all; but as for my Mr. Edward, my cheeks grow warm even now when I recall the intensity of the love I bore him. So great it was, sometimes it grew to pain. Once, when he asked me how much I loved him, after a vain attempt or two to find some measure for my love, I gave a little moan, and laying his hand across my throat, I sobbed: "I love you so big, it hurts me wite here." And then he caught me up in his arms, and passed his lips to and fro, to and fro, across my aching throat, till all the pain was gone, and called me "Mite," and "little Sweetheart," and kissed my tear-wet eyes, and mounted me in state at last upon his shoulder; and when I threw off his hat, he laughed, and carried me about

and showed me a bird's nest and many other fair and marvelous sights beneath the blue sky, while I passed most of my time in showering kisses on the top of his head, and loving him. How I loved him! and oh, dear heaven, if only he had not loved me, perhaps it had not all happened as it did!

My family noticing me so much, I saw little of my mother, who was sewing for my Mrs. Judge, and sat all day long at work in a little room just off the sitting- or morning-room, and opposite the staircase—which proved very convenient on those occasions when I decided upon falling down the stairs. 'T was here I came to be dressed, since my mother rose so very early that she had to leave me in bed to finish my sleep.

But before the ceremony of dressing took place, I had a duty to perform, in providing breakfast for seven small variegated kittens—half-orphaned, and wholly hungry. They awaited my morning appearance with feverish anxiety, and on sight of me they fell at once into line,

Indian file, and followed where I led—straight to the bowl of morning's milk that was waiting for us. Then, with night-gown raised that I might not stumble, with short arms clasped close around the bowl, and eyes fixed unwinkingly upon the dangerously swaying milk inside, I, with my streaming tail of cats behind, made solemn progress across the big kitchen, through the summer kitchen, out to the back porch,—a mighty journey,—where, with bowl placed on the floor, and night-gown lowered, I rested from my labors, and watched with absolute delight the seven little rose-pink tongues dart in and out of the sweet white milk, the fourteen fat little sides gradually filling out and becoming round. After this I trotted back to be myself groomed and dressed for the happy day of little lessons from my dear Miss Kate, pats and nods from my Mr. and Mrs. Judge, and loving indulgence beyond belief from my adored Mr. Edward; while each day and every day they individually and collectively charged me not to touch green plums, green apples,

green this and that, or I should surely suffer from that awful thing I called "cololol" in my vain attempt to repeat correctly their word "cholera."

Particularly was I charged to leave the green plums alone, because, by some chance, one plum-tree grew outside the orchard walls, and directly in my way. And I daily made solemn promises, with many noddings of the head, and a finger in my mouth, and being corrected regularly for that, repeated my solemn promises, and all the noddings, without the comforting finger in my mouth, but with hands clasped behind my back—which effort usually capsized me; while the gravity with which I accepted these reversals, and calmly waited for some one to stand me up again, filled my family with mirth. My Mr. Judge would shake with laughter, and say: "Oh, come here, you little graven image, and kiss me!"

But it was in my Mr. Edward's neck I hid the troubled solemnity of my face, and he would stroke my hair, and open my silent little mouth, and look within to see

if the cats had robbed me, and know no rest until my baby tongue was set going again. And so I went trotting and stumbling through that sweet time of sunshine and love into the day beginning with the laughable, childish disaster of the summer morning, which led to the awful disaster of the black night.

We were poor, my mother and I, and I owned just two toys. One was a doll, quite small, but of such hideous aspect the very cats turned tail and fled from her. I wanted my Mr. Edward to kiss her once. But he asked me if I did n't think it would be much nicer if he took off his hat to her? He said he did n't know her very well, and besides, he noticed one of her eyes fell inside of her somewhere when I kissed her, and perhaps they might both fall into her if he were to kiss her. So I consented to his proposal, and he always took off his hat when he met us in the garden, where I played "cololol" with her by tying her hands across her stomach to express the pain she suffered, and put green plums in her lap to show what a bad doll she was.

I also owned—oh, that I had not!—a tiny pewter iron. I think it cost two cents, and the amount of laundry-work I did was astonishing. So long as I heated my iron in the sun on the window-sill, all went well; but, alas! the spirit of mimicry that lives in every child dwelt in me. I saw the woman in the kitchen put her irons on the hot stove; I saw her wet her finger and touch them, to see if they were hot, rub them on a cloth to make them clean: therefore must I do all these things.

By standing on tiptoe I could put my little iron on top of the stove; so I did it, and turned to make my doll-clothes ready for ironing. When all was prepared I returned to the stove; but there was no iron there. In vain I looked, craning my neck anxiously. The little shining flat-iron was not there. Then my anger began to rise, and turning to the woman working at a table, I demanded of her my "iwon." She said she did not have it. I said she did. Just then she went over to the stove to change her cool iron for a hot one, and in a moment she gave a great

roar of laughter, and, pointing to a silvery, quivering little ball or great bead lying on the stove-top, declared: "That 's your flat-iron, miss, all melted into that!" and fairly howled with great-mouthed enjoyment.

It was too much for a very small person with a very fierce temper, who was, moreover, keenly sensitive to ridicule. Rage entered into and possessed me to such an extent the woman became frightened, and, running to call my mother, met Mr. Edward and brought him instead. He gave but one look at the speechless, white-faced, passion-shaken "mite" before him; then, catching me up in his arms, he demanded sharply, "What does this mean? what have you been doing to the child?" And while the servant volubly explained, he carried me outside, and sprinkled water on my face, and gave me some to drink, and gently forced open my little clenched-up fists, and kissed each palm, and held me till, quite supine, I rested on his breast, and putting my arms about his neck, weakly whispered: "She 's bad, she is; she tooked my iwon and then she made fun to me."

But he said "No," and took me back into the kitchen and tried to demonstrate to me the possibility of turning a beautiful pewter flat-iron into a trembling, rolling, little liquid ball, and incidentally to restore the servant's character for truthfulness. At first not even he could convince me. At last, however, when he had dropped the hot liquid into a cup of cold water and the pewter hardened again, I was convinced, and in that moment there came to me a sense of loss, such utter, hopeless loss, as I trust few babies ever know, and sorrow, without one trace of anger, taking possession of me, I wept as if my heart would break, and ever kept repeating:

"I dess had that one iwon, dear Mr. Edwar'; I only had dess that one little iwon!"

And Mr. Edward gave a groan and looked long at me, and shook his dear head, and said: "Mite, little Sweetheart, life will be hard for you." And I was true to my sex, and instantly asked, "Why?"

He did not answer that question, but told me what he would do if I would cry

no more; told me of a wonderful toy of real iron, just like the flat-irons the grown-ups used, only very little, that he would get for me from the city, that very day.

I shook my unbelieving head and answered with a sob: "Tan't put it on the stove!"

And he said: "Yes, you can, dear; you can make it hot enough to blister every finger you own; just think of that! And you can burn clothes, and frighten your mother, and keep everybody nice and lively." And when he added that I might iron a handkerchief for him, and do it all myself, I seemed quite won over, till he wished me to promise that I would be happy while he was away. Then I frowningly shook my head. I could not be coaxed to give the desired promise. At last he asked me why; and I burst out passionately: "Tan't be happy wifout Mr. Edwar'!"

How he laughed!—the ringing laugh of youth. Then he began telling me all I could do: there were the flowers to see to,

and the kitties to play with, and I might, perhaps, fish up my doll's eyes.

At that point I interrupted by exclaiming: "Doll's eyes in her head now, bofe; they 's glued fast; muvver did it!" And I ran and brought the fair object to sh him.

His face turned very red, and his mustache twitched, so that I put my finger on it, saying: "'Stache squirms." And he said: "My dear child, she would make anything squirm. Do you know, I think I like her better when she wears her eyes on her *inside;* she looks kinder. Then you can ask yourself your Sunday questions —and give the answers plain, please, without any additions, such as you gave father yesterday, when he asked them."

Instantly I was all excited, and hastened to defend myself: "He laughed to me, he did. He dess ast me to who was first man, first woman. I say, Adam, Eve; and they was in their garden in dess naked bare skins, dess like I am in my baf, and got shame to theirselves, and found a lady's apron with leaves on 't, and put it

on. And he laughed to me, and you told me that you' own self."

He tossed me up in the air, and cried: "Mite, you will be the death of me, yet!" Oh, heedless, cruel words! Then he said: "Now tell me good-by; I 'm going for your iron, my little maid."

How I clung to him! I am glad to-day of every kiss I pressed upon his kind face. He loosened my strangling embrace at last, and went over to the stables.

A little after, as I sat on the grass preparing to tie my doll into an extra hard case of cololol, I saw and heard. The horse and trap were at the door. My Mrs. Judge and my Miss Kate were crying and my Mr. Edward was saying: "Oh, nonsense, dears!" And I repeated to my doll, "Oh, nonsense, dear!" Then my Mr. Judge put his hand on my Mr. Edward's shoulder, and said something I did not hear. But Mr. Edward—I always heard what he said—answered: "There is no danger, believe me, sir." Then he pointed to me, and said: "She is nothing but a child, but you don't know how deeply she

feels." And then he laughed a little laugh, and added: "You would n't ask me to break my promise to a mere baby like that, now, would you, sir?"

And he took his father's hand and held it a moment; then he kissed my Mrs. Judge and my Miss Kate, and got into his trap, and turned his horse's head toward the plague-stricken city. Once he turned and caught my eye, and waved his hat and called, "Good-by, Sweetheart!" And I kissed both my hands and cried: "Come back, dea' Mr. Edwar'; come back!"

But he laughed and drove away. So, laughter in eye and lip and voice, and in his heart the purest love for the little stranger child within his gates,—a nobody to him, a bit from the flotsam and jetsam of life's ocean,—he left us, in the heart of the golden day.

I was very lonely, and I am afraid I grew cross. I remembered suddenly that my dear Mr. Edward liked my doll's eyes inside of her; so with a cheerful forefinger I poked them both back again, and rattled them about in her poor empty head with

great satisfaction. Then, in memory of a cold my Mr. Judge had taken through falling asleep out here on the grass, I left her in the shadiest, dampest place I could find, charging her to "take cold and sneeth hard."

Then I wandered off, looking for my kittens; but the whole seven were curled up in one furry, sleepy mass, at the bottom of an old market-basket, and play they would not. One or two of them yawned, showing me their sharp little fish-bone teeth, but that was all. I called them "nasty little lazies," and then felt sorry for it, because my Miss Kate had told me that "nasty" was not a nice word for very small girls to use.

I was so lonely, so disappointed. I turned at last and trotted off to where my mother sat working, and laying my head against her knee, I burst out crying. She pushed me from her, catching up her work and exclaiming sharply: "You must n't cry on this dimity; you 'll spoil it!" then drew me back again and let me cry in peace on her sewing-apron, that being

quite tear-proof, and her own. Poor mother! her first consideration was for her employer's material. Her baby's grief was a secondary affair. Poverty teaches many mothers just such lessons.

I slid down beside her, and almost directly noticed a fly in a bar of sunshine on the floor. He had been in trouble recently, and was working over himself at a great rate, straightening a crumpled, bent wing. Then he stood upon two front legs, and took a pair of middle legs, or arms, and crossed them over the small of his back, which he rubbed and rubbed. Then he twisted his legs together, and then untwisted them, which made me laugh. And he looked up at me and said "Hallo!" and I said "Hallo!" too. Then he ran backward a few steps, and jumped up in the air, and buzzed a little; and then he went at his back again, and he said: "You wait a minute, till I get this dried milk off my back, and I 'll show you something funny. I know you; you 're the little girl that feeds the cats." And I said: "Do you know my Mr. Ed-

war'?" And he shut one eye, and he said: "Let me see; is he ticklish?" And I answered: "Yes." And he said: "Then I know him. I was walking on the back of his neck all the morning. He 's restless; it was he that banged my wing all up this way. Now, miss, my back 's clean; did you ever see a fly take his head off?" I said: "No." "Dear me!" he said, "that 's odd. Well, just look here, now." And he put one hand up at the back of his little red head and unfastened a hook, and down came his head in both hands, and he held it out to me and said: "Do you want to take a look at it?" And just then my mother's voice said: "If you don't wake up, you will get no bread and milk for supper; the cats will take it all."

The fly had gone, and taken his head with him, though I looked carefully for them both.

After my supper, I gathered all my seven kittens—very attentive to me now—into my lap, and sat in the corner and asked them all my Sunday questions, and told them who made them, and what of;

and the Sunday subjects seemed to exert the same influence over cats that they exert over people, for we all fell asleep together.

Then I was being bumped a good deal, and I opened my eyes long enough to see that it was my mother who carried me, and that the candle was crooked, and that the grease ran down on one side of it at each upward step on the stair. When next I opened my eyes I was in the dark. I put out my arms for my mother; she was not there. At the same moment I heard steps,—hurried steps in the hall, steps that passed my door, and then others that paused there,—and the door was thrown quickly open. My mother came in, a candle in her hand, and she all dressed as for the daytime. She never glanced at me, and she looked so strange, I felt afraid of her. She threw open the door of a closet, and began pulling down from a high shelf great big woolen blankets; and suddenly right above her on the ceiling there appeared a gigantic, terrifying black head.

I murmured, "Mama!" but she never noticed me. She stooped and lifted the blankets, and turned with the light toward the door, followed all the time by that great head. Then, more loudly, I cried: "Oh, mama!" But she answered sharply, "Hush, keep quiet!" and went out, shutting the door so quickly I could not tell whether the great black head went with her, or whether it was shut up there with me. I was not afraid of the darkness,—that is a terror reserved for the well-to-do,—so I flung my little legs over the edge of the bed, intending to go after my mother. But the thought of that head stopped me. If it could move all over the ceiling and wall, it might come down to the floor. So up I pulled myself again, and in the hot summer night, with little limbs cast all abroad, and long hair thrown upward over the pillow, I waited for my mother, and wondered if she would be afraid of the great head—wondered what she wanted of the big blankets—and—and—and—

"What was that? Oh, what was it! A

cry so long, so piercing, so awful, in that still blackness, it seemed to reach from the garden clear up into the heaven where my Mr. Edward said the great God lived who loved all little children. I sat there stiff with fright, while something like cold air seemed to creep through the roots of my thick-growing hair. I could not move, but finally I heard my own voice say: "Oh, Mr. Edwar', where are you?" And I waited and waited, and at last I slept, for when I opened my eyes the room was full, full, oh, full of sunlight, and I was alone, as usual, a fact I accepted cheerfully enough, and slid myself down from the high bed, and picking up as much of my wardrobe as I could carry, I started down-stairs, going backward on knees and elbows. My cargo was not well placed, I fear, for it shifted before the voyage was over, and a good deal of it went by the board, for when I reached the foot of the stairs and looked up, I saw one small petticoat, two socks, and one shoe in my wake. I was not disturbed by that, however; such things had happened be-

fore; but never before had I failed to find my mother sitting there at work.

The air was heavy with an odor I detested—that of vinegar. My kittens seven, with their appetites, were awaiting me, though, and with erect tails quivering at their tips with excitement, followed me in line as I went to get their bowl of milk. But there was no milk. Instead, there stood upon the chair a great plate in which mustard had been mixed. I wrinkled up my nose disgustedly; I hated its smell. Then, too, I had always seen it mixed daintily and in small quantities; and I thought: "Some one will get scolded for making such a lot."

There was no one in that room, no one in the next. No cook or dairywoman, no waitress, no mother. I went slowly outside in my bare feet. I heard the cows moo and moo; but there were no men, not one grown-up to be seen, no, not anywhere. I laughed aloud. The sun shone hot and bright, and all this world was mine. I ran my feet into the edges of uncut grass, and cried out at the cold, and stumbled

back in haste to the shaven lawn again. I watched a great bumblebee pushing itself out backward from a scarlet flower, and one of my seven a-hungered ones licked my naked ankle with its rough little tongue, and I fairly gurgled with delighted laughter. I saw a toad, too, and was going to scream, but I remembered my Mr. Edward told me that he had ear-rings, or a breastpin, or some sort of jewelry in his top-head, and was very wise to keep it out of sight. And he knew, too, when it was going to rain, but he would n't ever tell anybody. So I just did n't scream, nor touch him, either, but let him sit and wink his eyes.

Then I fared forth to the front of the great house. Still no grown-ups. The lake was blue and still; the house was still, the shutters all tight closed. Could every one have gone away and left just me behind?

Then suddenly, with widening eyes of pleased astonishment, I saw something gently waving at the door, something thin and black, and, yes—yes, there were long

ribbons, too! "Oh," I said, "they falled out of the window, and I can have 'em for my dolly's dwess!" and I ran to the steps.

When there was company, or when any one was looking at me, I could with great difficulty get up those steps upon my feet; but now, at that moment, haste was the first consideration, and I made the ascent on hands and knees. I had much trouble in getting the long black things free from the door-knob, but at last I had them, and gurgling with delight, I trotted back around the house, trailing my awful treasure-trove behind me; and it seemed to me I heard from somewhere within, in the closed house, voices singing a Sunday song. I was not sure of that, and I only cared for my mother's scissors now, and my dolly.

I had obtained both, and sitting on the floor with bare feet stretched out before me, the skirt measure taken, I was just putting the scissors to the crape when there was a cry—one rough hand dragged me to my feet, and another one pulled from me "my own things, the things I

had found my own sel'," and I was shaken violently. The grown-ups had come back, and they were all cross to me, and oh! I wanted my Mr. Edward. *He* would n't be cross, and he would tell me why all these grown-ups had been crying, and what was the voice in the dark night, that went up, up in the sky, and "'fraided" me so.

I have no memory of being dressed, or of anything but my search for Mr. Edward. I asked every one for him, until some one —I don't know who it was, but may God forgive the cruel act—some one caught me up and said roughly: "Come here; I 'll show you your Mr. Edward!" And a voice said: "Don't—oh, don't do that!"

But the one who carried me went on quickly through the house, so still and all so dark, and up the stairs, where the odor of vinegar grew stronger as we went. And then we were in a hall, and at the farther end there was a woman all in black, on her knees by a door. Her face was bowed down, but her hair was gray, and I knew it was my Mrs. Judge. I was frightened; I tried to get down; but the

strong, cruel one held me fast, and opened the door, and we entered the room. It was dark, save for one long, bright ray of sunlight which came from an imperfect shutter. That ray fell upon a great, long box. I struggled violently, and then held out my arms and cried in an agony of terror, "Mr. Edwar'! oh, Mr. Edwar'!" while my tormentor went straight on, and by main force held my face directly above the opening in that great, black box. But I swiftly closed my eyes, and with my last ounce of strength stiffened my little body out in one act of repulsion, tried to cry aloud, but found the waves of the lake were beating high in the room, and all was cold and dark.

Then I was in bed in daytime, and I could not speak or eat without a scolding. And then there was a tall, gray man there, a doctor, who seemed very sorry about something, and he said: "Bring her favorite plaything here." And they brought the kitten who wore her hair parted in the middle like my dear Miss Kate, and put it on the bed; but I turned

my face to the wall, and shivered, and muttered: "Mr. Edwar'—I dess want my Mr. Edwar'." And the sorry man said angry things about being cruel, and about somebody's brain being shocked, and he patted me and went away.

Then I was out in the garden again, and still searching for my one friend. I came, at last, face to face with that pitiful riddle: How could my dear Mr. Edward possibly be down in the ground at that place over there they called "a grave," and at the same time be up, up in the blue where the great God was?

I was unhappy. No one was unkind to me. I still had my little lessons in letters and sewing little seams, and in gentle manners. But they—*they* were different. I always felt cold when I was with them. One day I had on, at my own request, my best dress and my slippers, and I was very proud of them; and on that day I displayed myself, and tried all my little airs and graces, to the very last one, to attract their attention and win a smile from my family; but in vain. I felt so small, so hurt; the

pain was in my throat again; and I laid a trembling little hand on Miss Kate's knee and said:

"Dea' Miss Kate, ain't the rest of you ever goin' to come back no more?"

She looked quickly at me, and said: "What—why, what do you mean?"

In dumb misery, I stood trying, trying to get some words to make her know my meaning. At last I stammered out:

"The rest—the other rest of you—that used to be—when—when Mr. Edwar' was—?" Then, with a burst of sorrowful triumph, I cried, "He loved Mite, he did!" and stood there sobbing.

My Mrs. Judge got up quickly, and said, "May God forgive us all!" and she went straight out of the room to my Mr. Judge outside. And Miss Kate was very pale, and she looked hard at me, and then she said, "Oh, Mite, forgive me!" and her face began to work, and she drew me to her and kissed me, and smoothed my hair and said softly twice over: "Edward's little Sweetheart! Edward's little Sweetheart!"

And then she dried her eyes, and stood

up, and said quite loud: "Yes, Mite, the other part *shall* come back to you soon—soon as may be, dear!" And she took my hand and led me out of the house. As we crossed the porch, I looked back, and saw my Mr. Judge sitting in the shadow, his hands resting on his cane, and my Mrs. Judge stood beside him with her arm about his neck.

But we went on, out into the blazing sunshine, and suddenly I took my finger from my lips to point with delight to a branch of plums directly facing us. "Oh," I cried, "see; the green, hard plums are all made blue and sweet now. Who did it?"

She looked up in the sky a moment, then down at me, and said very low: "God did it!"

She turned her gentle face a moment toward my Mr. Edward's grave; then she raised herself up very straight and tall, and said out loud and sweet:

"God, who doeth all things well."

And that 's my last recollection of my family. I can never see them after that.

My greatest pain in recalling them all, I think, lies in the feeling I have—a feeling that is strong as absolute fact—that my Mr. Judge never rested his eyes upon my face, from the moment Mr. Edward turned toward the stricken city.

THE GALLANT THEOPHILUS

THE GALLANT THEOPHILUS

OU must often have heard the expression, "He looks as though he had just come out of a bandbox." Well, when Theophilus arrived at his present home he literally stepped out of a bandbox, in which he had traveled from Philadelphia, in company with Antoinette and Susan B. Theophilus—his charming wives.

Perhaps, for the sake of the proprieties, it should be stated at once that Theophilus is not a Mormon, but an aristocratic, handsome, and very, oh, very small bantam rooster; hence his otherwise peculiar domestic relations.

When the bandbox was brought into the house, there was tied over its top a piece of mosquito-netting; and just as the mistress eagerly pulled it off, the gar-

dener cried: "Take care, mum; they 'll dash out and be breakin' everything."

But the little fellow said quickly: "Keep still, my dears; there 's nothing to be afraid of; that fellow must take us for a lot of wild prairie-hens, confound him!"

While all the time the mistress was crying: "Oh, you lovely things! Oh, is n't he a little gem?" and she softly laid her fingers on his head and stroked him, at which he drew a thin white film across his bright garnet eyes, lifted up his feathers after the fashion of a parrot, and said: "K-r-r-krut! k-r-r-krut!" And every one laughed aloud, for though he spoke in his own language, even the men and women understood that he wanted the mistress to go on rubbing his head and stroking his feathers, which she smilingly did until Antoinette's jealousy showed itself in a really sharp peck at the mistress's hand; but in answering her husband's indignant inquiries, she defended herself very cleverly, declaring she had not pecked at the lady's hand, but at her ring. She reminded him of her attacks of indigestion, of her

old-time longing for diamonds, and added that, as they were the hardest stones in the world, she thought if she could get one or two diamonds into her gizzard they would grind up her food so thoroughly there, she need suffer no more from indigestion or bad dreams; and it had been the sudden flash of the stone that tempted her to peck. And her husband, loving her, was easily convinced. But Susan B. wondered how on earth she dared to look him in the face and tell such a lot of fibs.

Meanwhile the mistress, rubbing the hand Antoinette had pecked, was searching her mind for a name for the new-comer.

"You see," she said, "he is so very, very small, I can't give him a short name; if I did you could n't see him at all. No; he must be built out: what he lacks in inches must be made up in name. Then, too, it must be one that can't be belittled by a nickname. I think," said she, "Theophilus Thistlesifter would do nicely." But the men in her service objected unanimously—German, Swede, and Irish. As one man, they declared the name

to be hard to pronounce quickly on even a workday, and impossible on a holiday. And the mistress, who was a just woman, admitted that, for example, on the evening of the glorious Fourth of July it might be a difficult task for a man to call Theophilus Thistlesifter to his supper or his perch, as the case might be; therefore she dropped the second name, but clung to Theophilus, declaring that a respectable man should be able to pronounce that word in any circumstances.

And so he was named; and then the gardener lifted the box and carried the entire family down to that portion of the chicken-house and -yard that had been wired off especially for their use, put the box down, and withdrew. Then, after a moment's pause, Theophilus said: "Come on, girls; I 'm going to get out of here and stretch." And out he hopped.

Pretty? Well, if his mistress thought him pretty in that bandbox, what could she think of him out on the ground! Feathers white—a fairly glistening, snowy white; feet and legs yellow to the tint of gold;

comb and wattles blazing scarlet; while the carriage of his small mightiness was his crowning glory. With his head thrown back till it almost touched his upright tail, his wings held slightly out from his sides, his chest thrust out, he stepped haughtily about, as if seeking an antagonist; and many a time since then has he proved that his tiny body thrills with the high-hearted courage of the warrior, and he is ever ready to hurl his ounces of weight against the pounds of his Plymouth Rock or black Spanish enemies—roosters who might easily destroy Theophilus by the simple process of stepping on him.

After stretching, he looked about him a bit, then gave a few short, quick scratches at the earth while tenderly calling: "Chook, chook!" And at that well-known summons both the ladies hopped out of the bandbox and ran to eat the refreshment he had provided for them, while he remarked: "Well, loves, this is New York, our new home; and, as far as I can see, the air, the sky, and the earth are about the same; but I do notice that the bugs

and worms here seem to be of quicker and livelier movement than those at our old Philadelphia home; so you will do well to keep your eyes open and your bills well sharpened, ready to come the moment I ring the dinner-bell."

That was Theophilus's one joke; but both ladies, politely holding their claws before their open bills, laughed heartily. For you see they were really very fond of their handsome mite of a husband, and though they heard it every day, they would not have let his only joke fall flat for the world. And their laughter was sweet in his ears, and he swelled out with self-satisfaction till he really was in danger of exploding.

However, he had to explore their new domain, and he did it thoroughly, while the ladies somewhat timidly peeked into the house to see what the nests were like. Antoinette—so called because of her pride and her fixed idea that her profile was queenly—was purer bred than Susan B., who could never have been exhibited, because she wore a pale, straw-colored half-

handkerchief about her neck, and also (of course this is mentioned in strict confidence) had a few feathers on her legs. It is probably not too much to say that those feathers greatly embittered Susan B.'s life. Still, she was very domestic, and had great executive ability; and if the nests were wrong in any way, she could kick them into shape quicker than any hen on the place, be she widowed, married, or single.

Finally Theophilus came back, reporting the place as fairly comfortable, a little small, perhaps, but he had been favorably impressed by the mistress, and was inclined to regard this enforced exclusiveness as a compliment to their quality, and doubtless in time they would be permitted greater liberty. He then escorted them with much high stepping to the water-dish, where they all drank, gratefully lifting their tiny faces skyward at each cooling swallow; and after that, with astonishing dignity for such wee creatures, they retired to their corner of the house, where Theophilus selected a perch he thought suited to their grasp, and, with perfect justice,

placed himself in the middle, as between Antoinette and Susan B. he could watch over them with equal care. But Susan always managed to be the last one to mount the perch—she so hated to have any one notice those wretched leg-feathers of hers.

That night, just at midnight, the velvety black silence was suddenly pierced as full of holes as a tin skimmer by the voice of Theophilus, whose crow had the height, the depth, the length, and the strength of a small calliope; and the mistress, sitting up in bed holding her hands to her tingling ears, exclaimed: "Oh, the conceited little aristocratic wretch! That clarion call must be a challenge to all the dead game-cocks of the colonial period; for his pride is so great, he would much prefer associating with a well-bred ghostly rooster of Washington's time, rather than with a common flesh-and-blood barn-yard fowl."

But be that as it may, from that time to this, at the unholy hour of twelve midnight, and at three in the morning, winter or summer, Theophilus rises in his pajamas, and sends forth his sleep-destroy-

ing crow; and if he has not yet succeeded in raising the dead, he has at least prostrated the living on more than one occasion.

But the quality that was really to make him popular in the neighborhood—a self-sacrificing devotion to his wives as lasting as it was delicate—showed itself the very next day after his arrival. Whenever, during the routine of domestic duties, one of the ladies found it was time to deposit a pretty, toy-like egg in one of the nests, she assumed a nonchalant, even an absent-minded expression,—sometimes, in the case of Susan B., going so far as to hum a snatch of song,—and, under cover of this indifferent manner, separating herself from the rest of the family, discreetly retired to the privacy of the nest. Now, other roosters, at such times, are apt to be found bandying compliments with pert young pullets, or foraging selfishly for themselves, or picking fights. But not so Theophilus. When he missed his tiny wife, he smiled knowingly, scratched up a few choice grubs or slugs, and, under cover of No. 2's enjoyment of them, slipped after

No. 1, and, with a friendly "K-r-r-ut, k-r-r-ut," cuddled his handsome little body down as close to her as he could possibly get, where, as egg-laying seems to be a somnolent occupation, they dozed and nodded sociably together, until the sudden opening of her clear red eyes, and a choking "Cluck, cluck!" in her throat, told him the séance was over; when, in a perfect whirlwind of triumphant joy, they issued forth, and, cackling and strutting, made the circuit of their inclosure.

It seems strange that the pleasure of laying an egg never palls. An experienced old hen will, at her thousandth egg, show the same hilarious joy that the sight of her first egg produced in her. But then, a perfectly shaped white or ivory-tinted egg is a very beautiful thing, especially when you find it in a sweet-scented nest of hay instead of the wooden box of the grocer; and it is a wonderful and valuable thing; and perhaps, after all, the hen is to be excused for showing that she knows a good thing when she sees it.

The peculiar conduct of Theophilus was very soon noticed by the men on the place, and they would leave their work to go and stare, with rude laughter at his delicate attention to his wives. And by and by it was spoken of in the neighborhood, and ladies came sometimes to peep into the house and see for themselves the tiny little white rooster sitting close to the nest's side, keeping his wife company during the egg-séance, and they bubbled over with delight and admiration; and there can be no doubt that Theophilus enjoyed their praise, for he was a little beau, to the tips of his small spurs.

In another way, too, he differed from most roosters. The immense Plymouth Rock cock, known as Plim, would, for instance, solemnly dig up some fat slug or grub, and would call loudly, "Chook, chook!" and his string of wives would come rushing, all out of breath, eager to enjoy their expected treat; and when they had all had a good look at it, he would say, "Now just see me eat it!" and down he would gobble it himself, and then strut

about and think himself a great creature. But the gallant Theophilus would set his strong little claws to work and tear the earth up like a tiny plow, and when he turned up some delicate morsels he would "Chook, chook!" and the little ladies would come running, and Theophilus would draw back and watch them while they ate delightedly these fruits of his toil; for Theophilus was then, as he is now, a gentleman.

They lived very happily. Antoinette, to be sure, had no diamonds for her gizzard, but crushed oyster-shells and clean pebbles seemed to answer as substitutes. Big Plim was the one drawback to their peace of mind. He was a coarse fellow, and he used to put his big yellow eye to the meshes of the wire net and stare at the ladies till they were quite upset; and Theophilus told him more than once that he 'd take it out of his skin some day, if they both lived long enough. And they did live long enough, and Theophilus kept his word.

Yet, right in the midst of their content-

ment, disaster came. Poor Susan B.! a cruel accident took her out of the world, the only comfort being that it was so swift a stroke that she had not time even to feel fear. After that Theophilus was never away from Antoinette's side. The men said that he fed that laying hen as if she had been a cheeping little downy chick. And so sweetly and lovingly they were passing through life, when Antoinette began to droop, to sicken. All that the mistress could do was done—medicine given, artificial heat applied. No use. Antoinette was dying, and Theophilus knew it. Poor little man! She could not stand on her feeble legs, so he would not stand on his. He, from sitting beside her, finally squeezed himself into the nest with her, and there he stayed. He would not come away to feed, to exercise, or to take a dust-bath. He left his feathers undressed, unpreened. They began to look dull; his bright comb was fading. And then, one day, he "K-r-r-uted" in vain. Poor Antoinette's little head lay sideways toward him, for she was quite dead. And when they

went to take her out of the nest, to bury her by Susan B., Theophilus, in a very fury of outraged grief, flew at the men's hands and fought like a small fiend, and followed them to the opening in the netting, and tried to spur their legs as they walked.

With tearful eyes his mistress lifted him and stroked his head, but he was silent. No pleased "K-r-r-ut!" answered her. And soon she saw there was but one small chance of saving the life of the grieving little creature. She resolved to turn him free, and let him go with the other fowls.

"Oh, mum," cried the gardener, "them big cocks will lick the life out of him!" But the mistress put her head on one side and said thoughtfully: "Do you think so? Well, I don't." And there suddenly came to her memory the chorus of a song an old negress used to sing at her work, and to herself she repeated:

"Oh, put yer little chicken
In de middle of de ring,
An' never bet yer money
On a shanghai!"

Then she added aloud: "I have faith to believe that that little fellow is game clear through. But even should another cock be too much for him, he 'd better far die fighting than die of grief." Which shows that the mistress had more sense than she is likely to get credit for. And so poor, lonely, drooping little Theophilus received his liberty when he no longer cared for it. Most of the fowls treated him kindly and spoke him fair, but he drew aside and walked sadly alone. Then up stalked the immense Plim, and looking down on Theophilus, he made a coarse remark about his size. Theophilus stopped and, looking Plim up and down, said: "Oh, I believe you are the rascal who used to annoy the late Ladies Theophilus? I told you I 'd take it out of your skin, and—"

Oh, it was a beautiful fight! Big Plim did his best; but that little fiend, so lightning quick, was everywhere except where Plim struck. He seemed to have turned himself into a bounding ball of feathers. Blood began to show on both of them. The wildest confusion reigned,—hens and

cocks cackling and crowing and screeching,—and at last little Theophilus succeeded in what he had been trying for from the first. The strain of game blood in him making him fiercely indifferent to the punishment he received himself, he fought on till at last he bounded on Plim's back and vindictively attacked his eyes; and the mistress had the satisfaction of seeing the men running to save big Plymouth Rock Plim from her lion-hearted bantam, the gallant Theophilus.

She took him into her lap, and as she sponged his bloody little face he cheerfully remarked: "K-r-r-ut! k-r-r-ut!" And at those welcome words his mistress burst out singing:

"Oh, put yer little chicken
In de middle of de ring,
An' never bet yer money
On a shanghai!"

For that fight had done more to stimulate the small widower than had all the iron-loaded water, the peppered food, and the ale-soaked bread offered him in the

past two weeks. It had increased the circulation of his blood, and had given him a distinct pleasure; for there are few pleasanter sensations than that of "knocking spots" out of a wretch who has insulted one held dear. So the mistress felt greatly encouraged about Theophilus, and herself fed him ale-soaked bread and minced meat, while she gave orders for the care of big Plim, who, standing principally on one foot, rumpled and discouraged, took, with his one good eye, a very gloomy view of life, which was probably intensified by his knowledge that, just behind him, two half-grown young cocks were imitating the late "scrap," to the hysterical delight of a group of Plymouth Rock pullets, before whom he had been in the habit of posing as a very god of strength and beauty.

Theophilus was all right in a day or two, and in less than a fortnight he was firmly established in the position which he fills to this day—a position requiring a watchful eye, quick decision, and plenty of nerve; in fact, he *polices* the chicken-

yard. Whenever there is a row on, Theophilus appears, stepping very high, and generally his passing between the belligerents two or three times is enough, and they walk off in different directions; but if things have gone so far that the "lie" has been passed or "spurs struck," he turns in and "licks" them both, thus keeping his "own end up" while preventing promiscuous quarreling and rowdy fighting.

The thing that tries him most is having to stop a hen-fight. Of course, one mad old hen can out-talk the finest rooster that ever walked, and set two of them going at once, and "that way madness lies."

But it is there his fine breeding and good manners come in. He will soothe them and smooth them, offering compliments to the oldest and ugliest, and to the youngest and happiest his sympathy for the sadness of her life, and at last leave them still talking "nineteen to the dozen," but not quarreling, only joining in praising him.

One bright autumn day, the mistress, being out picking up some pretty leaves to spoil the big dictionary with, heard the

low, pleased "K-r-r-ut! k-r-r-ut!" of Theophilus, and she said to herself: "Why, that sounds like old times, when he attended his little wives' egg-séances. I wonder where he is?"

She looked into the house, under the potting-shed; he was not in either place.

Again she heard "K-r-r-ut! k-r-r-ut!" She entered the orchard, and there, under an upturned cart, sat the glistening white Theophilus, huddled close to the lee side of the blackest and the biggest black Spanish hen on the place. She loomed above him, a veritable hill of black feathers, and while he addressed her in the tenderest tones, she looked down at him and gently pecked at two or three grass-seeds that had fallen on his white shoulders, with just the coy air of possession with which a young wife will pick a bit of fluff from the coat-sleeve of her brand-new husband. And at that sight the mistress looked about for a good dry place on the grass, and sat down there, and laughed until she cried. And when she heard a mad cackling, and saw Theophilus stepping highly and joyously by his big wife's side, she went and looked

under the cart, and there lay one of those immense milk-white eggs the black Spanish is famous for; and, with another burst of laughter, the mistress said: "Theophilus must have walked around that egg, for he could never step over it."

It was probably her inky clothing that first attracted the attention of the little widower. He could not, to save his life, grow a black feather himself, and that mass of blackness expressed his feelings perfectly. Then, he found her a simple, kindly, domestic creature of excellent family, and—and—well, winter was coming on, and he could not recall his little ladies, so he made up his mind to make the best of things, and took to wife the big, black, gentle thing. And she has more slugs and worms provided for her than she ever saw in her whole life before.

They perch in the little corner that has been home to him so long, and he polices all day, when not at the egg-séance, and rises in his pajamas promptly at twelve and three to crow, and remains still, in his mistress's eye, a very gallant little Theophilus.

A PRETTY PLAN

A PRETTY PLAN

WE were a pair of very little maids when we met. I was the stranger, and had shyly presented myself, with my books and slate, at the teacher's desk, and she (the teacher) had questioned me so kindly that I had not once put a comforting but forbidden forefinger between my lips; and then, after a look over all the room, the teacher had pointed out a desk at which one girl was already seated, and told me to sit there and share the desk with her. I obeyed, and at once began to look out of the corner of my eye at my companion. She had curls, long black curls, which, as a straight-haired girl, I was bound to adore. I had braids of a length and thickness that tempted every small boy I knew to grab them for reins, and a fairness of skin that

later filled my dark little desk-mate with envy.

She was dressed much better than I was, but our white aprons produced a seeming equality that prevented mortification and wounded feeling. One thing impressed me deeply: this little girl was eating a stick of candy. I had seen many little girls eat many sticks of candy, but never, never had I seen that very ordinary action invested with such grace and delicacy. She never crunched; one might rather say she nibbled. She held the stick lightly with the tips of her fingers, and the little finger was kept well out from the others, while about the lower end of the candy-stick, as a protection, was carefully rolled a narrow band of white paper, which struck me as being a thing peculiarly elegant and refined.

School had not yet been called to order, and there seemed no earthly reason why we should not have spoken to each other at once; but etiquette is etiquette, and certain unwritten laws are nowhere more binding than with little people. For some

time we examined each other with side-glances. Then she of the black curls drew a piece of paper from a book, and with a pencil printed something with much pursing of the lips and leaning of the head to one side. Then she shoved the paper toward me, and turned her head away and nibbled candy.

I paused a decent length of time, and then read, "E-s-t-h-e-r—me." After a bit I took the pencil, and, with much unnecessary moistening of the lead, printed "C-a-r-r-i-e—me."

She read, then put her hand in her pocket, and drew out a pearl knife-handle without a blade, and a penny. I looked silently, and drew from my pocket a broken carnelian ring, and held it out on my hand.

"Oh," she cried, "mend it!"

"Can't," I answered.

"Yes, you can," she insisted.

I shook my head.

"Well, Zac can; yes, he can. He 's my brother, and he can do 'most anything."

Just then school was called to order, and lo! we were friends.

At recess brother Zac was consulted about the broken ring. He decided that it could be mended only to look at; but Essie —as he called his sister—showed a disappointment at this so near to tears that he finally declared he could mend the ring so that I could wear it, if I would always remember to hold very still while I had it on.

Zac was older than Essie, and he was a manly little fellow. He did n't bully the girls, but he did fight the boys when they called him bad names. He had big, lustrous eyes. I remember I called them "shiny" then, and I told Essie he looked like a church picture. But she said: "Hush, don't tell him that, or he 'll be mad at you!"

Then she asked me if I knew what a cherub was, and I said I thought not. And she said, "You know a Cupid?" and I said, "Yes." "Well," she went on, "a cherub is just a pretty Cupid, that has n't grown any below his wings.

That 's all there is of him—a head and arms, and wings. And an old lady said once that Zac was a beautiful cherub, and he called her an 'old cat'; and then he got punished; and he just hates her now. Boys are so queer!"

In the next few days I found the beauty and dainty airs and graces of my little friend quite equaled by her kindness and gentleness. But I was surprised to see that Essie and Zac took no part in the games and romps of the other children. No matter whether it was "ring-around-a-rosy," or "Come, Philanders, let us be a-marchin'," or "puss-in-the-corner," or even "tag," they always crossed the street, and gravely seated themselves on a door-step, and looked on. Sometimes they silently played "jackstones."

I wondered greatly at this till, one day, a girl asked me to come and play "tag." I started to do so, but Essie, whose arm was about my waist, released me and drew back.

"Come," I said; "see if you can catch me!"

She shook her head.

"Don't you want to play?" I asked.

"Yes," she said; "but—but—they won't let me play with them."

"Why?" I asked.

She gave me one glance of her swimming eyes, and turned her head away, and I saw her cheek and ear and throat slowly turn to a dusky red. Then she said in a shaking voice: "I 'm a Jew."

Zac put his arm about her neck, and said: "Father and mother are Jews, Essie."

At which she shook back her curls, and in a steadier voice repeated: "Yes, father and mother are Jews." Then, looking at the children, she said sadly: "They call us cruel names, and sometimes they throw stones at us; and, Carrie, it is n't fair, for *we* did n't kill your Messiah; and now—now *you* 'll go to them, won't you?"

And I answered: "No, I won't; they are wicked little beasts!" For, you see, I was very young, and my manners were open to criticism.

"Oh," cried Essie, "I wish we were

sisters!" And I heartily and ungrammatically responded: "Oh, me, too!"

As "great oaks from little acorns grow," so from that brief sentence, "I wish you were my sister," grew the plan that involved so many, and brought two of us so near the wedding-altar.

Now there were *three* of us who daily crossed the street and sat on the door-step, where we gravely discussed theological questions with a solemnity fully equaling our ignorance. They explained the Jews' hopeful expectancy of attitude toward their Messiah, and one day I asked: "Suppose your Messiah should come, and suppose we Christians did n't believe in him, but said he was bad, and took him and hanged him, then would your grandchildren throw stones at my grandchildren, do you think?"—a question which shows our conversation sometimes took a rather speculative turn.

They often told me of the goodness and kindness of their father and mother; and once Zac said: "You see, Carrie, sometimes Essie gets kind of 'shamed of being

a Jew, but when I remind her that mama and papa are Jews, she is n't ashamed any more, because they are so good."

One noon they took me to their house. Their grandmother and grandfather and mother were at home. I saw all the pictures and books, and the big piano, on which Essie herself could play "The White Cockade" with both hands, hardly ever stopping to find a place, or anything. And there was a candle-box full of brand-new little cats, without one open eye among them; but when the old dog came to look at them, they all spit and hissed like anything. And I never saw so many toys in my life before. Still, when the visit was over, I found that the two things which had impressed me most were the richness of the fruit-cake, and the astonishing size of the three grown-ups' noses.

On my way back to school, Essie said, for about the twentieth time: "If only you were my sister!" And then suddenly she clasped her hands, and cried: "Oh, Zac, Zac!"

"What 's the matter?" Zac asked.

"Oh, Zac, when you marry, won't your wife be my sister?"

"Yes, of course," answered Zac.

"Then, Zac, dear Zac," begged Essie, "could n't you marry Carrie right away?"

Zac looked bothered, and he answered slowly: "I—don't—know. Perhaps—she—don't want—to get—married."

"Oh, yes, she does! Don't you want to get married and be my sister for always, Carrie?" eagerly demanded Essie.

Now, I was a very small woman indeed, yet instinct told me that a proposal of marriage should come from the brother, not the sister, and I remained silent.

"There," said Zac, "I told you so! She don't want to marry us!" At which Essie cried so hard that her little apron was quite wet.

I felt very guilty; and Zac, who never could bear to see Essie cry, turned to me and asked: "Why don't you want to marry, Carrie? Is it because I am a Jew?"

He had told me once that Hebrews kept their hats on when they were in the synagogue, and he seemed suddenly to think

of that, for he went on: "Churches need n't make any difference between us. I 'll take my hat off whenever you say 'Now I lay me' or 'Our Father,' and you need n't keep our fast-days, or anything. But you can have fruit-cake every single day, and play with Essie's toys, and when snow comes, I 'll pull you both on my sled. Essie loves you 'most to death, Carrie, and —and—I like you an awful lot myself."

I hung my head and whispered: "No, you don't."

"Cross my heart!" he cried earnestly.

Still I held back and doubtfully asked: "Do you hope to die?"

"Yes," he replied boldly. "Cross my heart, and hope to die, if I don't like you an awful lot. So let 's be engaged now. Then Essie can be happy; and next week I 'll call and ask your mother for you, and the week after that we 'll get married."

"Oh," cried Essie, clapping her hands, and tossing her lovely curls. "Do—please do say yes, Carrie! Be engaged now! Here is my blue-bead ring. Zac, give it to her. And oh, Carrie, think! we 'll be sisters

until we 're grown-up, big women; and then till we 're old, gray women; and then till we 're dead women!"

And so, while handsome little Zac placed the blue-bead engagement-ring on my finger, it was Essie and I who gave and took the engagement kiss, and it was Essie and I who walked hand in hand back to school.

For the next few days we were very happy little people. Essie seemed prettier than ever, and I loved her dearly, and she was so full of plans. Then, if I had a doubt, she dispelled it; if I found a difficulty, she smoothed it away.

Once I feared their parents might not like me in the family, but Essie cried out: "Zac, tell Carrie what papa said." And Zac informed me that he had told his father he was going to marry a Christian, and his father had laughed, and nudged his mother with his elbow, and then said: "Zaccheus, if you intend to marry right now, I won't object to a Christian; but if you wait till you are twenty-one or so, I shall expect you to marry a Jewess."

So that was all right Then the question of dress came up. It was winter, and I had no white dress.

"Wear a summer dress," said Essie.

"Can't," I said; "I 'd take cold."

Then Zac spoke up: "Her aprons are awful long. Why can't she just wear a clean white apron?"

"And," I added, "my Sunday hair-ribbons."

"Yes, that will do," decided Essie. "A long white apron and blue hair-ribbons. Mama will make the cake, and that 's all we 'll need."

Valentine's day came, and I had a dear little valentine from Zac. (I have it yet. It 's rather yellow now, but innocent affection seems to exhale from it still.) Another day he risked punishment by rolling an apple to me in school; and when I picked it up, I found he had cut out the core, and had put a note in the cavity. I was a very practical young person, and I said to Essie: "Why did he do that, when we will have recess in a minute?" And she answered: "Why, Carrie, don't you know

you have to be courted before you can be married? And the wedding 's for next week."

That same afternoon Zac gravely wrote down the name of the street and the number of the house where we were living. My mother was sewing there, as I had been careful to tell them early in our acquaintance. And then, when he had folded the paper up and put it in his pocket, he made me a little bow, and said: "I 'll call on your mother on Monday, Carrie, just as soon as school is out."

And Essie caught him about the neck and kissed him; but he did n't like that, and said crossly: "If you do that again, I won't get married at all, and you can go without a sister!"

And Essie said: "Why, Zac!" with two big tears in her pretty eyes.

Then Zac was good again in a moment, and came and petted her; but he said boys hated to be kissed. "Look at Carrie," he cried; "she never kisses me—that 's why I like her."

And so, peace being made, Essie and I,

with arms about each other's waists, and black head leaning against brown head, walked up and down, and put finishing touches to that pretty plan by which we were to become sisters, and never dreamed that it was to be our very last walk together; nor that our merry parting, each of us walking backward a long way, and calling out promises for to-morrow, and throwing kisses,—the only thing a girl can throw properly,—was to be a parting for life between the two chubby little maids who loved each other so much that they planned to be sisters always. Poor little plan that went aglee! Poor little would-be sisters!

I had scarcely entered the house when my mother, who was bonneted, and had her shawl and bag beside her, called me to her, and, reproaching me for being so late, began putting on my best cloak and hat. I could feel my eyes getting big with fright. "Where are we going, mother?" I asked.

"Oh, away up-town, almost out of town, to nurse a lady who is sick. What is it

about school? I can't talk now; it 's late. Your books will be all right; Mrs. M——, here, will send for them on Monday. What are you crying about? There will be another school to go to when we get settled a bit. Come, now!" And taking up her traveling-bag, and catching me by the hand, she unconsciously swept me out of the lives of my little promised husband and my almost sister.

A couple of months later my mother sent me back to Mrs. M——'s on an errand. As I was about to start home, Mrs. M—— said: "By the way, Carrie, the Monday after you left us, a little Jew boy came here, and asked to see your mother." I gasped, and turned hot all over. She went on: "He was the prettiest boy I ever saw, and made the best bow. I asked him what he wanted, but he shook his head and said he had important business with your mother, alone. And he was all kind of knocked in a heap when I told him you were both gone for good. And then he said: 'I don't know how I 'll tell Essie!'—whoever Essie may be, and—

Why, child, what are you crying for? You ain't afraid of getting lost going home, are you? No, I thought not. Well, good-by."

And I cried all the way home over the pretty plan that had failed and the would-be little sister I had lost.

AN AMATEUR SANTA CLAUS

AN AMATEUR SANTA CLAUS

WAS a very small city woman, and it was my first Christmas in the backwoods. I was but a few months over seven years old, but I was a very elderly young person indeed. The only absolutely childish thing about me was my perfect, my unshakable faith in Santa Claus.

My mother had gone to the distant city, —that visit, and its nearness to Christmas, arousing not the faintest suspicion in my mind,—and she had failed to return at the expected time. I was unhappy where she had left me, and had got permission to visit Grandma (courtesy title only), down the road. But before I reached the old log house my quilted red hood was white, and on my hot little cheeks were cold wet spots where the snowflakes had melted. There was neither knocker nor bell nor

even knob on the big door; but from a hole a leather string hung down, and when one pulled that, it lifted a big latch inside, and one pushed the door open, and entered, not a hall, or waiting-room, or reception-room, or withdrawing-room, but the house itself. It was an unusually large log house, but it had only one great room, and above that an attic room, which was reached, or had been reached in past years, by the help of a stationary ladder.

As I entered, the strange old creature I had come to see was busily engaged in plucking the feathers from a wild turkey. Before she welcomed me, however, her piercing black eyes had noted the snowflakes on my hood, and she sharply asked: "Honey, did you notice them sheep in the second field as you come along?"

I did not quite know about "noticing," but I diplomatically replied that I had *seen* them.

"What were they doin'?" she demanded.

"Nothing," I answered; "they were just standing still—not even eating."

She began pushing the basket of feathers

from her as she asked impatiently: "*How* were they standin'?—you poor, ignorant little city thing! Were they in a big circle—or a knot, with their heads down, and their rumps out'ard?"

"Yes, ma'am," I hastily put in; "their heads were down low, and they were all hunched up, like."

"Oh, Lord! then Luke and me must go out and fold 'em, right off now!"

Down went the turkey. The old woman rose, called Luke, the stiff, half-blind old dog, snoring in the firelight, and, without a wrap of any kind, tramped off to fold her sheep, in obedience to the sign their position gave her of the kind of storm that was coming. With just such faith, she always kept a spider-web in a dark corner, that the spider might let her know when it was going to rain.

A couple of hours later we were prisoners. The whole world seemed one great mass of eider-down, with our house pushed down in the middle of it.

The stage had made its weekly trip the day before—no chance of mother's coming.

And Santa Claus? Oh, dear! oh, dear! He did n't even know where I was; and if he did, could even *he* find his way across the great, wide stretches of the prairie, down through the bottom-lands, and up into the thick forest, where the clinging snow hid the blazed and belted trees that marked the way? And this was Christmas eve! I laid my head on old Luke's shoulder, and sobbed aloud; and at each sob he wriggled and whimpered, and every few moments he solemnly raised his wet fore foot and offered to shake hands with me for my comfort.

And then the tall, gaunt woman, with a string of gold beads glittering about her muscular old throat, was leaning over me and saying: "What 's the matter, honey? Be yer humsick, and cryin' for yer maw?" And I answered that Santa Claus could not come for me that night.

"Who?" asked she.

"Santa Claus," I repeated.

"Well, I be dog-gorned if ever I hearn of a name like that. Be it a man or a woman, and what kin to yer?"

And with wide, amazed eyes, I sat and stared at the woman of eighty-two who had never heard of Santa Claus.

When the kettle was hanging from the crane, and several mathematically exact beds of red coal had been prepared on the broad hearth, on one of which stood the covered iron bread-kettle, on another the big coffee-pot, and on another a baby pot-bellied kettle with pumpkin stewing in it, and right in the center of the great fire-place the wild turkey swung slowly round and round from a worsted string, while a tin beneath it caught the drippings—then for a time Grandma stopped her almost endless tramp back and forth by her big spinning-wheel, and, seated in her splint-bottomed chair, she stood me at her sharp old knees, and demanded of me the whole story of "this 'ere Santa Claus you 've been talkin' about. I thought Christmas was a Bible day, honey? My old man c'u'd read right smart, and afore he was tuk he used to read outen the Bible much as two or three times a year. But I never hearn of no Santa Claus in it."

I tried to explain, with the result of making her cry: "Oh, I see! he 's a sort of a hant, not a real man. Where do he walk when he 's at hum?" Again I explained. "Yes, yes," she said. "Snow and ice, and pine and hemlock, mostly, did you say? That must be up Canady way. My old man was in Canady just before the war in '12, and he said it was like that. Well, honey," with a heavy sigh, "don't you hang no stockin' to-night; for I tell yer I 've lived here, bottom-land and prairie, near sixty year, and I had a houseful of children, too, but Santa Claus never came here once, and I reckon he never will."

"Oh, Granny, I 'm sure he came when your children were here, only you did n't know to watch for him. I heard him myself, last Christmas eve, at the back window. I knew he was there, because I could hear mother quite plainly telling him she had one little girl, and she had at least *tried* to be good."

To my surprise, Granny laughed suddenly, and then said a long "O-h-h!"

Then, after a pause, she again advised me not to hang up my stocking; and when my eyes filled with tears again, she said: "Santa Claus is more a city hant, honey, and next year he 'll come to yer, when yer back hum again."

After I had said my prayers, Granny went to the door to let Luke in, whose own house was snowed up; and in that moment I flew to the great fireplace, and hung one little red-and-white clouded stocking there, and scampered back to the bedside. Then I stood on a chair, and then Granny threw me up to the top of the enormous feather-bed, where, from a deep trough, as it were, I looked out at the firelight playing over the long strings of red and yellow peppers, the pole full of pumpkin-rings hung up to dry, the bundles and bundles of "yarbs" and roots; at the mahogany-colored hams, and, in a corner by the fireplace, the flitches of bacon; at the turkey-wings, and— and—

Why, it was morning! I was alone. I rushed for my stocking. For one sick-

ening moment I thought it was entirely empty. Then I thrust in my hand, and down in the toe—oh, joy! oh, joy! something—what? Full of wonder, I drew out a necklace of three strands of beads. I could not know they were of a kind fashionable when my mother had been a child; nor did I notice that the once rose-pink bits of ribbon to tie them with were faded almost to whiteness. I only knew my trusted, beloved Santa Claus had come away into that backwood country for one little girl. I forgot my elderly conduct, and went cavorting round the room in my bare feet (what child ever caught cold on Christmas morning?), waving my necklace aloft, while old Luke pranced stiffly after me, barking wildly, with all the ardor of youth in his eyes, though the pains of old age were in his bones. Then in came Granny from the barn, remarking, at the door: "Well, you-uns seem to be plumb crazy!" But her face was just one great smile. While she helped me with my braids, she confessed that Santa Claus was a "mighty fine old hant," and rather

sadly reckoned she had "missed a heap by not knowin' of him afore."

Later on there was a great "geein'" and "hawin'" heard, and four oxen came plunging and stumbling through the snow. They drew a sled, and on the sled was a chair, and in the chair was my mother, at last; and she had seen Santa Claus, and he had feared he might not get to the log house she described, so, just for once, he allowed *her* to carry some of his gifts.

"Oh," I cried, "but he came his very own self, after all; was n't he good?" And Grandma chuckled as she walked back and forth beside her spinning-wheel.

As an actress of some experience, I want to offer my word of praise to this old amateur, who, without properties, without rehearsal, and at the age of eighty-two, had made a first and very successful appearance in the rôle of Santa Claus.

"MARTY MANY-THINGS"

"MARTY MANY-THINGS"

T was three days before Christmas, and all the chill, gray misery of the sky, the air, and the grimy city street seemed to center in the forlorn little figure standing doubtfully before No. 138 —— Street.

In the too short skirt, the broken shoes, the shabby hat above the pale, pinched face, it was easy to recognize at a glance one of Michael Wolf's small friends of the New York streets—one of those weary "little mothers" who, mere children themselves, know all the labor, anxiety, and care of maternity, without one trace of its joy.

The querulous, piercing wind came down the streets, forcing its way into every crack and crevice of the houses, through every stocking-hole and every

worn place in dress or jacket, until poor Marty Many-Things felt as if she were dressed in the kitchen colander.

Her real name was Martha Jane Farrell, but she had so much work to do, so many cares to worry her, that a Sunday-school teacher had said once: "Poor child! you are a regular little Martha—troubled about many things." Then she told her mother the teacher had patted her head and called her "Marty Many-Things"; and after that the name stuck to her, as such names are apt to do. And to-day she was indeed troubled about many things. Her father had, in her words, "been put away for three months" (meaning he was imprisoned). Her mother was "on the flat of her back" with "the sickness." For this mysterious ailment a homeopathic doctor had left her a bottle of white pellets; but early in the morning the marauding younger children had found the bottle, and, with tousled heads close together, had amicably divided and devoured them, the results being groans of misery from Mrs. Farrell, and slightly feverish symptoms in

the children, accompanied by an earnest desire for more medicine like that.

But these things, bad as they were, were not so hard to endure as was her sickening anxiety about the intentions of Santa Claus. Would he, or would he not, come to her house? She thought about him day and night, and had done so for so long a time that her poor little brain was nearly turned. Ever since the first cheap green trimming had appeared about the shop windows in her neighborhood, she had been praying, hoping, fearing. When she took her weary walks abroad, always dragging the two children with her,—William Henry holding to her skirt, while Catharine Anne sagged stolidly over one poor, thin shoulder,—she would wander up and down the avenue, gazing with bright, eager eyes at the beauties of the shop windows. Everything appealed to her, from the jewelers' trays, the splendid fur cloaks, the silks and laces, the books and musical instruments, down to the butcher-stalls, deep in fresh sawdust and garlanded with greens; while at the toy-

shops—well, she invariably halted there for a rest, and putting one knee up against the window-rail or -ledge, as the case might be, she slid Catharine Anne down, turned her around, wiped her bubbly wet mouth, remarking, for perhaps the hundredth time: "Well, you are the most hiccupy and slobbery child I ever saw, Catharine Anne! But now look at them dolls with all your might and main, for they may n't be there next time we come."

And Catharine Anne would stare stolidly in front of her, drooling, and nodding her bare bald head, and looking, in her mother's big shawl, like some toothless, tremulous, driveling old woman from an almshouse taking in the city's sights.

Meanwhile, William Henry stamped and pointed, and always, always found a painted monkey on a stick, at which he invariably pulled her skirt, and entreated her to tell him if Santa Claus had monkeys on sticks, and what day was Christmas day.

And sometimes little gusts of hope blew warm through her young heart and made

her eyes bright and her cheeks pink, and she would feel sure of the painted monkey, and of a ball with a rubber string, and sometimes she even believed in the possibility of a small china doll finding its way into the Farrell household. In those rare moments of confident faith she went so far as to declare the china one should surely be called Angelica.

The sweetest moments, though, were those precious ones when she and some other little mothers like herself had got their charges into bed, and could meet one another on the dark stairs, and, huddling close, with arms about waists, and skirts turned up over heads and shoulders to keep off the cold, could chatter like so many chilly magpies.

They talked endlessly of Christmas, describing how they thought Santa Claus looked; and it was really surprising to know by what a wonderfully narrow chance each one of them had just missed seeing the mysterious old man. Then they would warm their starved little hearts by playing "I choose," each one choosing what she

would have out of Santa Claus's pack, if she could. And Marty Many-Things always began with a monkey on a stick for William Henry, and some "for-true" white bibs with trimming on the edges for Catharine Anne—which went far to prove that Marty was not without a sense of the fitness of things. And for her mother a bottle of cologne, and a new back-comb, and a picture of a saint. And for herself a china doll, and—only because it was playing "choosing," you know—a little work-box with for-true scissors and thimble, and perhaps a dish or two. And so on and on until their eyes shone from excitement. And poor little Marty Many-Things, in her place at the foot of the family bed, among the six lashing feet of her mother and the children, was prone to dream, in feverish snatches of slumber, that she was sleeping in a livery-stable.

At first Mrs. Farrell had encouraged Marty to believe that Santa Claus would visit them—of course, with the historic proviso "if you are good." But then Mr. Farrell had, according to his wife, "laid

about him with too heavy a hand," and had been put away. And, somehow, after that she had not seemed so sure about Santa Claus's visit, and while all the neighboring children's hopes grew stronger, day by day Marty's grew fainter, until that dreadful morning when her mother, with her thin face turned to the wall, had said to her: "Martha Jane, Santa Claus can't get to us here; there 's no chimbly for him to come down—nothing but long pipe-things, with tin caps on top of 'em."

And poor little Marty had laid Catharine Ann down on a pillow a moment, and had gone to the kitchen, and buried her face in the roller-towel, and cried and cried till she was fairly sick over the disappointment and sorrow and shame. Yes, shame; for he would visit every other child in the street, she felt sure. And oh, poor little William Henry! Oh, what should she ever do? And then an idea came to her, and she stopped crying to look at it and turn it over, and as it seemed a good, sensible idea, she acted on it at once.

First, putting on her hat and unlined

old jacket, and pulling up her stockings smooth and tidy, she got a sock of Catharine Anne's, a stocking of William Henry's, and one of her own, and rolling them neatly up as she went, she descended into the bleak and windy street, turning toward the house of Mrs. Whalley.

She was a big woman with a big temper, who might have been called a common scold had she not been such an uncommon one. She kept lodgers, and they called her the "Sergeant." She had many children, and *they* called her the "Kicker." And in spite of all her scolding and storming, not one of them obeyed or would do the least thing for her. So many and many a time she had sent little Marty Many-Things (with Catharine Anne sagging like a bag of meal over her shoulder) down to the baker's shop for bread or rolls, and in return had given her—nothing; no, not even thanks. Many messages, too, had the tired child carried. And now in this trouble, when the "idea" had pointed toward Mrs. Whalley, Marty felt she had a sort of right, an earned right, to ask

a small favor from her. But when she reached the house her courage failed her. She stood by the ash-barrel, hesitating, shivering, and was just turning away when she raised her eyes and saw what a splendid chimney the house had; then, sending up one timid prayer to—to—oh, to the saints,—for in that moment of fright she could not have said the name of any saint that ever was canonized,—she scrambled up the steps and rang the bell.

Perhaps that frightened little prayer for courage may be fluttering about still among the gentle throng, trying to find which particular saint it belongs to.

When Mrs. Whalley threw open the door, Marty gasped before she could speak.

"Well?" roared Mrs. Whalley. "What do you want? Don't stand there like a dying fish!"

And Martha Jane lifted her white face and frightened gray eyes, and said: "You see, Mrs. Whalley, if you please, ma'am, we ain't got no chimbly at our house, and Santa Claus can't get down to us, and so, as you 've got a big family, and plenty of

chimbly room, I 've brought round our three stockings. They 're quite clean, and I mended 'em myself—and—and perhaps you 'll just let 'em hang in the room with your children's stockings? I can call around for 'em quite early in the morning —and—and—"

Her dry little lips could not form another word, for Mrs. Whalley was swelling up so visibly with rage, she seemed likely to explode at any moment—a possibility too dreadful to await calmly.

"Well," she cried, "of all the outrageous, brazen little beats I ever heerd of, you 're the worst! You get right out of here, now! I have n't got nothing to give, and if I had—"

"Oh," hurriedly interrupted Marty, "if you please, Mrs. Whalley, you did n't get on to what I said. I did n't come to beg —I only ast you to let our stockings hang by your chimbly; Santa Claus will tend to 'em, if he can only find 'em."

"And I 'd like to tend to you, you artful little fraud, trying to pull the wool over my eyes with your blather about

Santa Claus. Just as if there ever was any—"

A sudden cough and a sharp exclamation stopped her. They both looked up, and saw standing on the stairs Mrs. Whalley's best lodger, a singer in one of the East Side theaters. Her true name was Jane Bruce, but on the bills she was "Mademoiselle Jeanette de Beuse," which had been quickly rendered by the children of the street into "Jenny the Goose."

She stood with her lemon-yellow hair all a-frizz, her pretty blue eyes lined about with India ink, and her extravagant good clothes topped off with some sort of sealskin jacket—stood frowning and shaking her head at Mrs. Whalley. So much Marty saw; then with bowed head she left the house, while her tears plashed down on the rolled-up stockings in her hand.

Back in the hall she had left, Miss de Beuse was giving Mrs. Whalley a "good setting down" for her cruelty, and as she came to the door to see what direction Marty had taken, there were tears in her

black-lined eyes. She knew so well the hard, grim, hopeless life led by the little mother; knew she had never even seen the pearly depths of the foxglove or the morning-glory, let alone the wee fairy folk who live in them; knew her pavement-weary feet had never felt the delicious chill of salt-pool wading, or the warmth of the fine, sun-scorched sand; and she felt that all the romance, mystery, and beauty of Marty's whole childhood blossomed out in her sweet faith in Santa Claus; and she resolved to help her, if she could, in her great trouble. And so, as Marty crept slowly homeward, there came a tapping of high heels behind her, a rustle of silk, and a puff of perfume; and then Jenny the Goose was beside her and was talking to her. But when she invited Marty to hang her stockings in her room, Marty shook her head and answered: "No, thank you, ma'am; 't would n't be no use; Santa Claus would n't go near 'em there."

And, for some reason, Miss de Beuse got very red in the face as she asked why he

would not come to her room. But Marty explained that he "never went into any one's chimbly" if there were no children to visit; he did n't care about big people.

And then a thought came to Jenny the Goose of a pale-faced little girl who boarded away up-town, who would surely be remembered by Santa Claus, but who would be very lonely with only her toys, and no playmate and no mama to keep her company,—a happy thought, too, since it was for the happiness of others,—and she said: "I 've got a little girl—yes, that 's straight; you need n't stare so! Her name is Ethel Gladys Smith. I am—at least, I was Mrs. Smith before I went on the stage; and I board her out. But let 's see; three days—yes, I can do it. I 'll send for her, and I 'll let Santa Claus know she is coming here, and—and you 'll bring in all your stockings on Christmas eve, and you can hang them up yourself, if you want to, beside Ethel's, right close to the open grate; and the next morning you can come as early as you like and get them again. But I want you to ask your mother

to let you come and play with my little girl while I am at the theater, as I dare not leave her all alone. Do you think you can manage that?"

And Marty, who had come to a complete standstill, amazed and doubting, hoarsely whispered: "Yer—yer ain't playin' it on me, are yer, miss? It ain't no job?"

"No; I mean every word, fair and square. Does it go?"

And Marty swallowed at the lump in her throat, and clasped her hands tightly in her effort at self-control—then suddenly gave it all up, and right there upon the public sidewalk dropped on her sharp little knees, flung her thin arms about Miss de Beuse's waist, and kissed her garments passionately, crying in a smothered voice: "Yes, 'm; yes, 'm, it goes! Yes, I 'll bring the stockings, sure, sure!"

And Miss de Beuse picked her up, with a laugh, and told her to hurry home, or she 'd have a crowd about them in another minute.

How Marty Many-Things lived through

the next two days, doing all her work and taking care of the children, she herself could not have told. But after she had handed in the roll of stockings at Miss de Beuse's door, modestly leaving it to her to hang them, that Christmas eve as she ran home she felt little cold, soft touches on her face, and she saw myriads of wee white snowflakes dancing like mad in the gas-rays, and she laughed aloud at the unusual sight. When she got home, she proceeded to transform the wash-tub into a bath-tub by simply removing the wash-board,—poverty being very cunning in such devices,—and after her bath she went to bed, to give her mother a chance to wash her dress. For was she not to meet and play with Ethel Gladys to-morrow? To-morrow! Oh, would to-morrow ever come? And Marty turned and twisted and flung herself about in bed, till Mrs. Farrell was driven to say, out of the darkness: "Martha Jane Farrell, if there was more than one Christmas in the year, there would n't be a whole bone left in our bodies from the yammerin' of your two

hard heels! Be quiet, now, or put your feet outside the bed and kick! For all I know, Catharine Anne may be dead this minute from your lashin's!"

But morning did come at last, and even Mrs. Farrell gave vent to a long-drawn "Oh!" as she looked out on the beautiful white city, and murmured low, "It is the birthday of our Lord!" and crossed herself and said a prayer.

Marty Many-Things, with an old pair of her mother's stockings drawn over her shoes as a protection from the snow, waded through the white depths to Mrs. Whalley's house, and up to Miss de Beuse's room, and then—

Mrs. Farrell was preparing the poor breakfast, when she raised the knife from the loaf she was cutting, and paused to listen. Then she threw open the door and ran into the hall. Yes; she heard the cry, "Mother!" and then again, "Mother!" and leaning over the balusters, she saw far below Marty Many-Things, with the skirt of her dress turned up in front, seemingly full of something. And as she clam-

bered up the stairs, she cried at intervals, "Mother! oh, mother!" She stumbled in, white with excitement, and nearly breathless, and, dropping her skirt, spilled upon the floor four stockings and two socks, and each and every one of them was as stiff as a ramrod, and had humps and lumps all over them, so full they were of—what?

Marty caught her mother's hand and pointed in speechless joy at a protruding fiery-red monkey on a yellow stick. And then the Farrells in a body descended upon the gorged stockings, and wild confusion reigned. But when Marty found a doll, not a china one the length of her finger, but a true doll, flexible in the body, with hair she could comb, and eyes that slowly closed as you laid it down, she seated it gently in a chair, knelt down before it, and holding its stubby feet between her chapped and reddened little hands, she murmured again and again, "Angelica! oh, Angelica!" while a very passion of love and tenderness for the beautiful helpless thing grew so big in her heart that from very joy she burst into tears.

Then Mrs. Farrell dragged them from their prey, and seated each one of them solidly, not to say violently, on a chair, and bade them eat their breakfast, or they 'd not have one candy-stick or orange that blessed day.

Next, a man who was going to "the island" to visit his brother called for the two picture-papers and roll of tobacco that Mrs. Farrell wished to send to the "put-away" Mr. Farrell; and then it was time for Miss de Beuse to go to the matinée, and Marty must go to keep Ethel company. She wore the same old clothes, but Mrs. Farrell comforted herself by saying that at least she was whole and clean, from the skin out.

It was the first time that Marty Many-Things had ever gone out to play without dragging the children along, and she looked anxiously at them before starting; but William Henry was making the tormented red monkey dash madly up and down his stick, while the bright toy balloon tied to her wrist was bringing a faint smile across the aged face of Catharine

Anne. And never had Marty loved her mother so dearly as she did at that moment, when she handed out one of Catharine Anne's flannel blankets to wrap about Angelica, who went along, of course —Marty remarking, as she pinned her up warmly, "Snow weather 's so hard on children!"

That was a blissful day. Ethel Gladys was a sickly little thing, but gentle; and Marty watched in dumb admiration while the little girl's clever fingers made a wonderful hat for Angelica from a few bits of ribbon and wire; and she put one of her bracelets on Marty's arm, and they played everything, nearly. And when it was time for Marty to go home—then came the great surprise. Miss de Beuse had stopped on her way from the matinée, and made arrangements with Mrs. Farrell, and she and the children were to come to Miss de Beuse's room and stay with Ethel until the theater was out at night, and then they were all to have a little supper together.

Oh, that supper! Could Marty ever

forget it? Oysters—yes, oysters, and plenty of them! and sandwiches with pinky and white and dark meats; and red jellies and yellow jellies; and little wee cakes; and oh! one big all-over-white cake with a wreath around it and red berries; and a little bottle of wine—for-true, actual, honest wine—with a red ribbon all twisted about it. And they laughed; and Miss de Beuse sang them songs; and even Mrs. Farrell herself sang "I 'm Sitting on the Stile, Mary"; and Marty and Ethel sang a hymn. And Miss de Beuse gave every one a tiny, tiny glass with a thimbleful of wine, and they all stood up and drank to the health of Santa Claus; and William Henry, who had seen his father doing something like that, suddenly shouted: "For he 's a jolly good fellow!"

And so the party broke up, and Miss de Beuse, very pretty, stood at the window with her arm about Ethel, kissing her hand to them. And they walked home through the snow, with the air full of the tinkling of sleigh-bells, and every opening door let out laughter and song. And up in the

sky the stars glittered far and pure and beautiful. And Catharine Anne sagged peacefully over her mother's shoulder, and William Henry stumbled at her left, while Marty walked happily at her right, clasping Angelica closely to her breast. At last she sighed: "Oh, mother, there ain't anybody in the whole world as good as Santa Claus, is there?"

And Mrs. Farrell said: "I don't know; I suppose not"; then added, after a long pause: "But I *do* know that angels don't always have wings on their backs."

And Marty wondered who in the world her mother meant; but she did not ask —she was such a happy, happy Marty Many-Things.

A LITTLE ROYAL PRINCESS

A LITTLE ROYAL PRINCESS

IT was an evil day, cold, bleak, and drear; and in an upper chamber of the building once his palace, now his prison, sat a man who waited; and even while he waited patiently for the coming of those who were the precious fruit of his loins, so another waited for him—patiently or impatiently we may not know, since he who waited for his children was Charles I, King of England, while he who waited for him was Death, king of the world.

The evil day grew on apace. At last the waiting man's thin hands fell upon his open Bible, the last faint spark of hope faded from his famished eyes. And then it was he heard heavy steps upon the stairs, and a quick exchange of rough greetings in the corridors. The door was thrown open, and a man-at-arms, stooping, placed

what seemed two good-sized bundles of rough, damp cloth upon the threshold. But from the top of one, from under waves of pure blond hair, beamed a pair of eyes wondrously like his own, while from the other peered, mischievous and marmot-like, the tiny, brown, laughing visage of the queen-mother's self.

The elder was Elizabeth, the younger was James, princess and prince of the blood royal. When eager hands had solved the mystery of bow and tie and buckle, cloak, hood, and tippet, they were set free, in a limited sense; for, be it known, these innocents were prisoners, too, and had been held in the north of England, whence they had traveled, in this bitter weather, to creep for the last time into their father's arms.

Circulation being restored to their numbed limbs, and their bodies warmed and comforted with posset, the king held them together in a close embrace. If his tears washed their baby cheeks, he quickly kissed them dry again, lest they should know the bitterness of such tears as his.

And so he sat for a little time in a sort of joyous misery. Wee Elizabeth lay on his breast, her head back, her arms clasped about his neck, with rapture shining from her great eyes. The extraordinary affection existing between the king and this little daughter was well known at court, where it had more than once provoked the jealous wrath of the queen-mother, who had now, with her two elder children, found refuge at the court of France.

Little James patted his father with approving hands, and covered his face with kisses of prodigious sound. Only a little time was given entirely to welcoming endearments; then came the curt reminder of his guard: "The time is short!"

Aye, the time was short! His cup of life was almost drained, and surely the dregs were as aloes. The moment in which he knew himself to have been sold for so many pieces of silver by those who should have stood by him—rightly or wrongly, stood by him to the last—could not have been so bitter as the one in which, fate-driven, he looked into those laughing, lov-

ing eyes, and with his own words destroyed their babyhood forever.

But weary, worn, and sorrow-stricken, in answer to that hint, "The time is short!" he placed his little visitors at either knee, and gravely he addressed them—instructing, cautioning, advising, on strangely serious questions to bring to the attention of these poor mites—questions touching on religion, the rights of succession, and the like. Unhappy little children! When they should have heard and been taught only the tales and games of childhood, they heard the tale of their father's rapidly approaching, bloody death, and were taught that game in the playing of which their father had lost his throne—the game of statecraft.

Little Prince James was volatile of nature, restless and hard to hold to serious application or attention. But the sister was thoughtful beyond her years, and adorably tender-hearted. She listened to each low-spoken word with a white, speechless, tearless anguish that seemed like to kill her.

Having finally won the boy's attention, the king hastened to make him understand his true position and his real rights, and the right of his elder brother Charles, whom the queen had taken with her in her flight, and ended by receiving from him a solemn promise never, *never* to allow any one to make him king while his elder brother lived—a promise little James made with his chubby hands clasped upon his father's Bible and his babyish lips pressed upon its sacred pages. Then, being released at last, his attention quickly turned to his Majesty's great plumed hat lying near by on a chair. This hat he swiftly donned, almost extinguishing his bonny head in doing so, and proceeded to assume many stately and majestic attitudes. With hand on hip, where hung an imaginary sword, and right arm extended, he directed the movements of various bodies of men, represented by pieces of furniture. Poor little knight! while his play went on, others in that room felt the cold presence of Death himself.

The king took his suffering child into

his arms again, rocked her upon his breast, covered her pale face and sealed her great, strained eyes with tender kisses, and filled her ears with every sweet, foolish, babyish word of endearment they had known in other days, and murmured over and over again: "My little maid! my bonny little maid!" until at last the stony stillness of her face was broken, the strain gave way, her little form was shaken by convulsive sobs, and saving tears poured down her wan, white cheeks.

A little later, when they were back again in coat and cloak and hood and tippet, she stood, pale and exhausted, holding tightly the king's last, most precious gift to her,—his very own, *own* Bible,—and watched with wistful eyes her father taking his last farewell, in this world, of his little son—saw the kisses, heard the prayer and blessing; and when the boy was placed upon his feet again, she drew nearer, and the king was stooping to take her up, when quickly he raised himself and made this last request of them. Gently, but very seriously, he asked them

not to speak much of what had taken place during this their last interview; indeed, he would prefer they should not speak of it at all. And then Elizabeth made her strange reply, unheeded then, but later on recalled, repeated, and remembered for many a year. Clutching his hand tightly in one of hers, while with the other she held the Bible to her breast, and looking straight into his eyes, she said:

"Sire, I 'll speak no more!"

The door was flung open. The men waited but impatiently—a monarch so near his death was not worth patient service. And for the last time Charles took his darling in his arms,—his comfort, as he had often called her,—and held her close, and laid his white, worn, sorrowing face on hers, and suffered—only God and himself could know how terribly. As she passed her little arm about his neck, her hand slipped beneath his heavy, falling curls and came in contact with his smooth, strong throat. At that touch there must have flashed upon her a picture of the coming horror, for she gave a sudden, gasping cry, and

lay unconscious, white and still. And so they parted. The doomed man stood in silence, and saw them carry his little ones away; but when the men-at-arms bore Princess Elizabeth down the stairs, with trembling lips he murmured: "My little maid! my *bonny* little maid!" and her wee white face, lying against the rough leather jerkin, looked like a snowdrop resting there.

All through the long black night the children traveled north, and without consolation or comfort; for there was no woman with them in whose pitying breast they might have hidden their stricken little faces.

There were short pauses, for food and change of horses only, all the next dreary day; and yet, ere the next night had closed down upon them—so much faster can a horseman travel than a coach—they knew the awful truth. Back there in sullen, grimy London, the waiting was all over. Charles had obeyed the summoning finger and bent the knee to Death. As king he may have been weak, obstinate, deter-

mined only at the wrong time, but as a man he shone as an example for his country and his court—a faithful husband, an adoring father, a generous, loving, if too trusting, friend. But we have naught more to do with him, since all the world knows what came to pass upon that last dreary January day in 1649.

"It was a trying journey," said one who shared it. "The weather was hard and rough. The roads were worse than the weather, while worst of all was it to watch those two poor bairns shivering and sobbing in each other's arms. I 've no great love for the Stuart blood, but I was glad to see those orphans safely housed after that heavy journey."

If a man, healthy and hearty, found it a heavy journey, what must it have been to those delicate little curled darlings of the court, with grief and terror added to physical discomfort?

The next day after their return people first noticed something odd in the demeanor of the princess. When the lady wife of their keeper came to see the chil-

dren, Prince James greeted her as usual, while the princess rose and made her grave obeisance, but spoke no word of greeting. Solemn little mite! The greatest painter of his day has left your pictured loveliness for us to gaze at. Such a little maid, in long gown of stiff flowered brocade; a waist cut square at the neck, a tiny stomacher, a string of pearls about the soft baby throat, a small lace cap tied firm and close, but with waves of hair tumbling from beneath it; and ah! the eyes—the sweet, heart-breaking, pathetic eyes! Thus she looked when standing mute before her keeper's wife.

The interview soon ended, but ere long those who had charge of the children reported that the Princess Elizabeth was refusing steadily to eat. There was then another state visit, and when requests proved useless, a threat was made that food should be forced upon her. At this the blood rose red in her mutinous baby face, but she remained silent. Only, when her porringer was placed before her, she silently ate a portion of its contents. But ever and always she was silent.

Those who were placed to watch related that when the little James, in his romps and plays, would suddenly burst into violent weeping, and rush to his sister and tell her how he wanted mama or his father, she would put her little arms about him and kiss him many times, and smooth his brow, and croon over him, but never speak; and by and by he would run away, comforted. At night, in their little gowns, she drew him down beside her, and they knelt hand in hand; but while James made his little prayer aloud, Elizabeth never spoke.

Sometimes she was seized with a mortal pallor and strange shiverings; but she made no plaint nor moan. Again, her cheeks were scarlet as with burning fever, and her eyes bright and hot-looking; and though, when the hour of their serving came, she drank ravenously, not one word would she speak to obtain aught to quench her burning thirst before the regular hour. When little James was froward and got himself a reprimand, he would fling away to Elizabeth, and she would cosset him and in her speechless way would soothe

and quiet him. But those who served them became filled with fear of her. They said she was "uncanny." Some said she "communed with the dead." But one old woman who came to peep at her made answer: "Oh, can you no see the poor bairn just eats her heart and drinks her tears?"

A doctor had been summoned, for the people who held the children were in no wise cruel to them. His coming was late in the afternoon, and some time was given to courteous greeting and explanation, and then he was led to that portion of the building where the little prisoners were lodged.

As they approached, a woman came flying down the corridors. She was pale, and cried excitedly: "Oh, come! Prithee, come!"

As they hurriedly entered the room, they first saw Prince James standing, with convulsed face and streaming eyes, sobbing: "Now she won't kiss me. This long, long time she has n't played. Now she won't kiss me—she won't!"

Poor little lad! No one noticed him or his grief just then. They rushed toward the chair which stood with its back to them, and in it they found the Princess Elizabeth. The window she faced was high, and she had placed a large book and a pair of cushions in the chair to raise her up, that she might look from the window. Thus she sat upon a sort of throne. Upon her silken lap lay open the precious gift of her adored father, the worn old Bible, and her waxen, tiny hand lay on the printed page. Her right elbow leaned on the table at her side, and her dimpled chin rested in her hand. Her fair, blond hair fell on her shoulders, and her great brown eyes looked straight into the flaming glory of the sunset sky.

In stately silence she had given audience to Death. Not even his terrifying presence could make her break her promise to her father: "Sire, I 'll speak no more!"

So she passed, without a father's kiss, without a mother's breast to pillow her dying head upon, without even the famil-

iar sound of her baby brother's laughter in her ears.

So she passed—on weary, though pure, unsullied little feet—bravely, calmly, gravely passed through the open door. A little royal princess of England. God rest her soul!

THE PRINCESS PORCELAIN

THE PRINCESS PORCELAIN

In joining contrasts lieth love's delight.

HE had always been interested in the frail little thing. They were in the same row—the outer one—of the same oval bed, that was crowded with fellow-pansies, and he was quick to notice that by the gardener's carelessness the space between himself and his right-hand neighbor was wider than it should have been—a fact that annoyed him even then, and later on became a source of real distress in his otherwise quiet life.

This little right-hand neighbor seemed to attract by her very weakness and slowness of growth. He came, himself, of a Dutch strain, and showed it in his sturdy growth of stem, and the body and velvet of his blossom. "King of the Blacks," he

was called, and really he deserved his name—though one intensely dark purple fellow who had been called "black" the summer before remarked, somewhat maliciously, that the title of "King of the Blacks" would never pay *him* for going through life with a pinhead orange dot for an eye—the purple one having himself a very large and beautiful golden-yellow eye with dark rays.

The King used sometimes to fear the little maid at his side would never reach maturity. If the sun was very strong she shrank beneath the heat. If the rain fell she would sometimes lie prostrate. And those were the times when the distance between them distressed him, for, as he often told her, he could and would have supported her, and at least partly sheltered her with his broader leaves; but as it was he could only help her with his advice—which, for a wonder, she gladly followed; and when she at last formed her flower-buds, if a shower was imminent, he would hurriedly warn her to turn those delicate buds downward, that the water

might run off, and so save the tenderly folded petals within from watery ruin.

Up to that time his feeling for her had been simply the tender affection one is apt to feel for the creature we help or protect, and he had often looked back with a bold, admiring orange eye at the many smiling, little, mottled, banded pansies, who had not hesitated one moment to nod at him—for they are a generally coquettish tribe. But one warm, still May morning, all this was changed for the King of the Blacks; for there stood his slow-growing, frail neighbor, holding up to his startled gaze the sweetest, tenderest, truest little face in all Pansydom.

She was not brilliant, nor velvet-blotched, nor yet banded; just a lovely porcelain blue of perfectly even tint, without markings of any kind, the pure color deepening into a violet eye, with that speck of gold in the center that in a pansy answers to the pupil of a human eye.

Looking upon this innocent beauty, King of the Blacks was suddenly shaken by a great passion of love and longing.

He realized in that moment that she held all the sweetness of life for him, just as he saw the whole beauty of heaven reflected in her small face. For one moment he enjoyed the unalloyed bliss of his discovery; the next, alas! brought to his knowledge some of the tortures that invariably accompany true love. Was he, then, jealous? Of course. Who could see that small, fierce orange eye of his, and doubt his jealousy? And goodness knows he had cause enough—but through no fault of little Porcelain Blue's, mind you. She adored him—was a-quiver with love from the edge of her topmost petal to the tips of her thread-like roots.

But think of that maddening space between them! Do what they would, they could not bridge it over. They looked and longed, and longed and looked, but only their sighs sweetly mingled. They knew neither embrace nor kiss.

The King of the Blacks was a sturdy fellow, and jealousy and disappointment made his temper prickly, and sometimes he wished many things of an unpleasant

nature upon the gardener, whose carelessness had caused so much suffering. Often he cried out for a pest of mealy bugs or slugs or snails to come upon his garden! Once he went so far as to wish moles to follow his footsteps beneath the lawn; but seeing how he had frightened Porcelain Blue, he took that back, like the Dutch gentleman he really was.

But it was hard to see all the winged marauders buzzing about his gentle little sweetheart, offering her the tattered compliments they had offered to each floral feminine they had met that day—to see a great bumblebee, looking like a small barrel with wings, go blundering so heavily against her as to nearly knock her down! But oh, worst of all, to see that butterfly —that royally striped, banded, powdered, idiotic flirt masculine!—to see him impudently clinging to shy little Porcelain Blue's shoulder, while he stole the precious nectar from the sweet flower lips that cried vainly for the King to drive him away!

No wonder he grew ill-tempered. He

was so helpless! And what can be more maddening than helpless strength? All he could do was to urge Porcelain Blue to call up her power of growing, and then to direct that growth toward him, while he cheered her up by calling her attention to the extra long arm he was forcing forward as rapidly as possible toward her—knowing well that the lady mistress of them all would much prefer his black, velvety blossoms to such a growth of leaf and stem; but, true lover that he was, the interests of his beloved came first with him.

Then, too, the King of the Blacks had much to endure from those about him. He had never concealed either his love or his distress, and there was much merriment at his expense among the flowers of his own bed, and the insects that daily visited them. The tall, blond pansy on his left—a white, satiny creature, blue-edged and blue-eyed—was so annoyed at his attentions to that little half-developed "chit" on his right that she deliberately twisted her neck in the most painful man-

ner, that she might turn her face clear away and so spite him; but he never even knew it. The other pansies were so close to one another that they smiled and flirted, and put their bonny faces up and kissed each other gaily in the full sunlight, and then laughed over their shoulders at the King, who, black in the face from anger, was sure to be watching the corseted, slim-waisted wasps hovering about little Blue. He knew the visits of the ants were particularly unpleasant to her; they scratched her arms and shoulders so, though they were very gallant and complimentary, and stroked her face very gently with their wiry, black fingers. In fact, the pretty, kindly ladybugs were, with one exception, the only visitors little Blue really welcomed—the exception being a big red-breasted robin, whose quick, bright eyes and sharp bill kept all worms beyond frightening distance.

One perfect morning, when all the world seemed made for love, the King of the Blacks felt his heart was breaking. Little

Porcelain Blue drooped and hung her head so sadly, while all the others were fairly asway with laughter. And just then, warm and sweet and strong, the West Wind came blowing—the romping, teasing, rowdy West Wind. Many a time had he chucked the little one under her chin and sent her petals into a wild blue flutter; and now he paused a moment, disturbed at this sadness. Sadness in the path of the West Wind? Oh, no; he would not tolerate that! So back he drew a space, gathered himself together, and then made a laughing rush upon the lovers, flinging with tender force young Porcelain Blue full into the eager and clinging arms of the King of the Blacks. Then, mischievously bumping their pretty faces together he, with rustling, fluttering, and waving, went on his merry way, leaving them to learn in peace the sweetness of the flower kiss they had dreamed of in bud beneath the stars, and had longed for in full blossom under the blazing sun. The work of the West Wind was done, and was well done. Porcelain Blue was so en-

tangled in the strong arms of the King that she remained there; and if he found his heaven in her sweet face, she found hers in his gentle strength; and so happily they lived their little space, and knew only joy unalloyed.

One early summer day the following year, the mistress stood looking down with puzzled eyes upon a stranger in her great bed of saucy, wide-eyed beauties, in all their satiny, velvety gorgeousness. She knew them all by name. There were Kings This and Queens That, and Warriors So-and-So, and French-stained and German-blotched, and Somebody's Royal Collection. But where did this stranger come from, here in the outer row of the big oval bed?

Down on his knees, the gardener expatiated on the perfection of form and the firmness of texture to be found in this beautiful nameless blossom, that was upheld so firmly by its sturdy stem.

"Pure porcelain-blue markings, that give it an almost human smile," mur-

mured the lady; "the markings of blackest velvet, and that great red-orange eye. Where have I seen that peculiar eye, and where that pure, even tint of blue? Why—"

And at the same moment the gardener struck his earth-stained hands together, exclaiming: "The King of the Blacks, ma'am!" while his mistress cried: "Porcelain Blue!" and the gardener finished: "It 's the hoffspring of them two plants, ma'am, as sure as you 're alive; and she 'as no name, poor thing!"

"Oh, yes, she has," smiled his mistress. "She is of royal parentage, and beautiful, and she is called the 'Princess Porcelain'"; and to herself she whispered: "Ah, love never dies! That is proved by the existence here of Princess Porcelain."

THE HERMITS

THE HERMITS

HE was a slender, serious, dark-eyed boy, and my close friend. I called him "Hal," instinctively feeling what a misfit was the name Harry, by which his family called him. I was proud of being his chum, not only because he was a boy, but because he was two or three years my elder, and so, of course, was two or three years the wiser.

He was no girl-boy. He raced, played ball and marbles, ran away and went in swimming, and took his thrashing for it, just as other boys did; but he was gentler than they—he was imaginative and thoughtful.

We were the only children living in that direct neighborhood, which was a very retired one, so that our companionship

seemed the natural outcome of the situation. We were both "booky," we were both Sunday-school enthusiasts, and he was the son of an intensely religious mother—a God-*loving* woman, with whom prayer was a joy, not a duty; who praised her Maker because he had made her, and in his own image; a woman who under a great blow and loss had actually lifted a smiling face and cried triumphantly: "'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth'! Whom he loveth—think of that! And I, the humblest of all this whole cityful of people, to be chastened by his hand! I am unworthy!"

In this neighborhood the city had been altering the grade of one of the streets, and so had left on one side, as a high bank of clay, three unimproved building-lots. The moment my marauding eye fell upon that bank, I cried: "Oh, Hal, if only there was a hole in it!"

And he frowned and said: "A hole? What good would that be?"

"Why!" I sputtered excitedly, "if the hole was big enough, we could crawl into

it, could n't we? And it would be caves and grottoes; and we could be fairies, or Robinson Crusoes, or hermits, or robbers, or—"

But Hal, who was an honest-minded boy, interrupted me with decision: "Hermits, Carrie. We 'd be hermits, and read the Bible there, and eat dates—if they have them at the grocery! Let 's go see; I 've got a penny."

"But," I said, "there 's no hole yet!"

And Hal answered calmly: "Not now there is n't, but there 's going to be; we 'll dig it right away."

Oh, that hole! For days I walked like an ancient crone stone-stiff with rheumatism. Hal toiled manfully, desperately, with a small fire-shovel, minus handle. But I, alas! for picking, digging, shoveling, had no better tools than a kitchen spoon and an old tin biscuit-cutter. Never would that hole have been larger than the inside of a big pail but for the aid of a good-natured Irish laborer who one day sat at the foot of "our cliff," as we called it, to eat his noonday meal.

His great shovel drew us like a magnet, and soon we were asking aid.

"What do yez be wantin' a hole dug for, then?" he mumbled, with a half-slice of bread an inch thick in one cheek, and a chunk of corned beef on the blade of his knife, waiting at the very edge of his lips for the earliest possible opening for itself.

"It 's to be caves, and we 're to be hermits," said I.

"What 's thim?" asked our friend.

"Men," said Hal, "who don't wear much clothing, and who sit in caves and read the Bible and eat dates and think."

"Glory be!" exclaimed the astonished hearer. "They must be dumbed fools intirely. Sure, don't they know a man can read his Bible wherever he likes, and keep *all* his clothes on if he plaises? But come, now, and we 'll see to this hole." And in a few minutes, with mighty arms and immense shovel obeying his kindly will, with throbbing hearts we saw our cave growing, growing, until, oh, joy! we knew we could crawl into it. Then suddenly the work stopped.

"Oh, please, sir, won't you make it go a little deeper in?" pleaded Hal.

But our friend answered profanely that he would not; and then he hammered us amicably on our heads, called us a "pair of gossoons," and added that very likely the "whole dumbed thing" would cave in on us if we did n't take care—a prognostication that troubled us not one bit.

As hermits we retired from the world at once—that is, we retired as far as the peculiarities of the cave would permit us to. Our four legs were, unfortunately, very palpably still in the world. But as we sat well back in the hole, our bodies were quite out of sight, and, as Hal declared, we were ever so much better off than was the ostrich, with only its head hidden.

And as we sat side by side, high up in the face of the bank, we had a clear, far view of the tender blue of the lake, where it gently, gently melted against the blue of the sky; and, with our own little Bibles open on our laps, we used to look at it silently a long time; and twice I over-

heard Hal say low to himself: "Almost like that, but not quite."

Once he pretended he had not spoken, and once he did not even hear my question of what he meant. And so I came to know that his big brown eyes did not always see me when they were turned upon me—knew that my friend, my chum, my brother hermit, had a secret; and so tears came into the cave.

It was too bad, a secret kept from *me!* And I had told him every secret I had, and every secret anybody else had that I knew anything about. He was quick to see something was wrong, but he was quite stupidly slow in learning *what* was wrong, and I was too proud to ask for his confidence. So the hermits were for a time tempted to abandon their cave, their date diet, and their intended close comparative study of the writings of Buddha and a Chinese gentleman of the old school to whom I always referred as "that Mr. Confusions."

We had, however, agreed to study our Sunday-school lessons in our cave, and that

simple fact saved our partnership as hermits from being dissolved. We studied our verses against time and each other. Then we took turns at hearing each other recite our lessons; and one day I said suddenly: "Oh, how I do wish some one would tell me how the apostles looked! Somehow I can't see them—at least, not to feel sure of them."

And Hal gave a jump that nearly took him out of the cave, and said quickly: "I can tell you, Carrie. They looked exactly like a—a—"

He stopped, he turned his head away, he pretended some one was calling him.

Then I was angry. "That 's right!" I cried. "Stop, don't tell it, whatever it may be! Don't trust Carrie—little tattler and tale-bearer!"

I leaned my forehead against the side of the cave. I burst into racking sobs.

"K-e-e-p—keep your secret! I d-d-don't want to hear it! And—and you can keep your old cave, too—and pl-ay hermit all b-y yourself—and *nev*-er tell your se-cret to any-body!"

Poor Hal! he tried to whistle (the boy is father to the man), but he could n't. With his left hand he raised my head and laid it back against his right shoulder. Then he took up the corner of my apron, and with most kindly intent began to smear my falling tears all over my grieving, dirty little face, while between dabs and jabs at special single drops he begged me to stop. "Oh, Carrie," he entreated, "*can't* you stop? Don't you know *how* to stop? There 's no secret, Carrie! There 's s-o-m-e-thing—yes—I wanted to tell you, too—honestly I did—but—but I was just afraid you 'd laugh at me—and"—in a low, tense tone—"I don't believe that I could *bear*—to hear *that* laughed at."

I sat up and looked at him, and very seriously he returned my look.

"Mother knows," he said slowly, "and I 'm going to tell just you in all the world, and no one else. I 'm not afraid now that you 'll laugh, Carrie."

He drew up his leg and clasped his arms about it. He looked straight before him. His eyes were wide and bright; he was

very pale; his delicate nostrils quivered faintly. There was a moment's pause.

Looking back to that moment, I tell Hal's little story as he told it—all the incidents in the exact order in which he gave them.

Without turning his head he said to me:

"You remember how very hot it was three Sundays ago, Carrie? Well, after Sunday-school was out I went to church with mother. The heat was dreadful, and my head was heavy and achy. Mother offered me a fan, but I would n't have it—it never makes a feller any cooler to sit and pound himself with a fan. But all I could think of was the big old elm-tree where we play 'oasis,' and you sell me water for my caravan from the desert. I could just hear the leaves moving, and I knew what a big cool shade they were making—and they all had their heads down at prayer. No one would notice,—and even if father heard of it, he never punished me on Sunday,—and it was only three blocks to the elm; and so I moved very, very quietly—no one looked up. And

next moment I was blinking my eyes out in the sunshine, and wondering if ever the sun had blazed like that before.

"I walked for a while, but I found no elm; instead, there stood an old white wall with a great wide-open gate in it. I passed through it, and only then I noticed that everything was strange to me. I was n't frightened, but I was puzzled; and the heat—oh!—and the sky—not one tiniest, thinnest little skim of white cloud filmed the deep, deep blue. On still, hot days our lake almost reaches that blue, but not quite—not quite. I was thirsty, very thirsty; and though I passed melon-gardens, and saw grapes hanging over a wall, I dared not touch them. I looked and looked, but could see no familiar elm, and the chain of distant hills made me feel small and lonely. Then suddenly I heard a burst of laughter and the patter of running feet, and I turned, and saw coming from a garden gate a troop of children, the two eldest ones carrying large jars. They were not only bare of foot, but of leg as well, yes, and of arm—half naked, in

fact. They were a black-haired, black-eyed, red-lipped, sweetly laughing crew; and though they were greatly excited over some matter of their own, they called me gaily to go with them to the well, where the water was cold and the grass velvet-soft to burning feet. And there I slaked my thirst and found deep shade, though no elm cast it.

"There were trees strange to me, and some bore fair fruit. I knew the oak and guessed the palm, and on our way to the well I had seen in full rosy bloom a very thicket of wild oleander.

"We had found a girl already at the well, and before she went she took from her basket a handful of loose grain, pursed up her lips, swelled out her round, brown throat, and in imitation gave the cooing of the doves, then cast the grain abroad. I had not dreamed there was a pigeon near, but instantly, through sunshine and through shade, came the down-slanting gleam of their darting, silvery wings. Yet no one noticed the pretty, greedy things, with their rosy feet, their jeweled eyes, and

their dainty affectations of eager search and extreme hunger—so exciting was the conversation at the well.

"One boy declared his father was going to take him down to the very sea, next Sabbath, that they might hear the Man for themselves, since no two people seemed to talk alike of him; and then all broke out and chattered at one time.

"Not far off ran, white in dust, the public way, and many people journeyed by it; and many turned aside, as much to get the hot, white dazzle from their eyes as for rest for their feet and cooling draughts for their parched throats. But always there was excitement in the air, and each man added to it. The high, the low, the rich, the poor, gently or angrily, delicately or coarsely, they spoke, but always of one person. One subject held all minds.

"An old man, fat and red and hot-looking, with great jewels burning on his fingers, and strange head-gear, who left his servants and the animal he rode out in the blazing heat while he sat in comfort by the densely shaded well, declared the Man

a monstrous fraud. 'Oh, yes; he had heard the tale of sight restored, and the sick healed, too. Yes, yes; he knew that hundreds vouched for the truth of those wild tales. But, mark! He should be seized and cast in prison for healing on the Sabbath! The Sabbath, mind!—breaking the law—failing to keep holy the Sabbath day. Let him and his rabble come but within his city's gates, and straight into p .son the lawbreaker would go.' And as he bestrode his weary, unrefreshed beast and went his way, men frowned, and jeering little boys made contemptuous signs at his broad back, while talk, all broken and confused, burst forth again—one rousing astonishment by repeating the names of those most recently baptized; another expressing his timid doubts because, see you, the Man had not appeared in pomp and princely state, as should the One whose coming the prophets had foretold; while, with her sturdy boy riding in state astride her hip, a handsome woman told again, and yet again, with every foolish detail of hour

and place, of garments worn, of height and depth and quality of the jars, how she, a guest at that fair marriage-feast, had seen—herself had seen—the wondrous miracle of water turned to wine.

"The loiterers had mostly gone their ways, all save some women with their water-jars and their children. And now, in looking across the open country toward some houses, low, flat-roofed, and white, one saw the quivering of the air above the heated earth; and 't was then, just then, that I felt first that lightness, that brightness, that reasonless desire to laugh, to sing—oh, to sing from my very heart!

"My heart! why, what ailed my heart? I pressed my hands hard upon my side to hold down its high beating, and at that moment such a strange thing happened! I had only known our summer birds to sing in the early morning or late evening coolness, remaining silent through the heat; yet here, all suddenly, birds before unseen burst forth in rapturous song. They came from everywhere—from distant eaves, from sheltering boughs, from tan-

gled thicket, or from grassy hollow. They flung into the air, as might a fountain fling its spray, a shower of living music. Twittering, piping, trilling, warbling, each softly ruffling throat at fullest strain, each little eye half closed in ecstasy, they gave in praise all they had to give, then sank down in silent adoration. For moving toward us from the great highway there came a group of men. One of them, at least, walked clumsily, for he was followed by a great cloud of dust; and one shambled as he came, as might a weary, yoke-worn ox. Grave men they were, some even stern and fierce of eye, with roughened hair and beards untrimmed, and hands all swart and scarred and stained with roughest labor; while all the tones of burnished copper glowed in the hair and beard of one, and the red spark that gleamed in his quick, small eye was but partly veiled by his drooping lids.

"So far I noted. Then—ah, then the group had paused, and from the center there came forth, as from a prickly protecting outer shell the white, sweet-kerneled

nut might come—there came forth a Man, strong and sweet, beautiful and grave. The golden-brown waves of his hair were darker than the silky beard, whose light growth but softened the lines of his divinely perfect face. His garments fell in stately folds about him, and their whiteness, without blemish from wayside or from road, seemed dazzling in contrast to the blueness of his great flowing mantle. Yes, there came forth a Man to marvel at. But as he moved toward the stone seat by the well, he slowly raised his eyes. The quivering of the hot air stilled; the teeming earth held its warm breath in awe. My soul rushed to the very parting of my lips, for this was the Joy of the World! Here was the Son of God! I could not think at first—I could only feel the joy, joy, joy! And then at last I noted others, and knew my thought was: 'Would—oh, would he let me follow him?' If I could do some service for him—something hard! But I was so little, yet.

"He was seated by the well, and the group stood apart from him and spoke

low among themselves; and I almost unconsciously began to approach the Man: for oh, I longed, yearned, to touch him—once, just once, to see once more the tender fire of those death-conquering eyes. And lo! the other children were crowding toward him, too—their eyes big and bright, their half-breathless lips apart. I saw and hastened. I was almost beside him when a little toddling, speechless thing of dimples and soft laughter passed me in a baby rush, two little arms beating the air to aid her stumbling feet. She wavered forward, caught his hand, and he laid the wee thing in his bosom. At that we all swarmed forward eagerly; but two of the group stepped quickly out and frowningly waved us off, the stern one speaking cruel words to us. But they were never finished. He raised the white wonder of his hand and silenced them. He turned the tender fire of his luminous blue eyes on us, and then he spoke.

"I heard his voice! I felt that my eyes were straining, my heart bursting—that joy was killing; but still 't was joy. For,

clear and sweet, the whole world listening heard the blessed words: 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not!'

"He held his gracious arm out to us. I rushed forward. I was almost at his sacred knees—a hand held me back. The baby in his blessed breast smiled gravely at me. I struggled madly against that restraining grasp, and then a voice said in my ear: 'Harry, remember where you are!'"

His head sank on his breast; tears ran like rain down his boyish face.

"Carrie, Carrie," he whispered, "mother says it was—was—just a dream."

I slipped my arm about his neck; reverently I kissed his cheek and answered: "Hal, Hal, it was a vision—a blessed vision!"

And he was comforted.